

# THE LANDSCAPE, ITS HERITAGE AND ITS PEOPLE



CHASE & CHALKE  
LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP



# The Landscape, its Heritage and its People

## Evolution of the Landscape

This chapter provides an overview of the physical and human influences on the evolution of the landscape within the CCCV LP Area, including its geology; the history of settlement and land use from pre-history to the present day; literary, artistic and cultural associations; and its rich biodiversity.

## Physical Landscapes

### Topography and Hydrology

The underlying chalk geology has strongly influenced the varied topography of the area. The landscape within the study area is dominated by the smooth rounded downs, steeply cut coombes and dry valleys typical of a chalk landscape. The dip slope descends to the south-east where it meets the Dorset Heaths outside the area. The area is fringed in the north and west by dramatic scarps.

The main drainage pattern of the rivers within the area can be split into two. The key river influencing the landscape of the northern half is the River Ebble, a tributary draining eastwards into the River Avon south of Salisbury, just beyond the study area. The River Ebble flows through the chalk following lines of weaknesses to create a distinctive valley landscape with a narrow valley floor. The Ebble is a gently flowing river, falling just 60m over a 16km stretch within the LPS area.

Within the south of the study area watercourses drain the dip slope of the Chalk, flowing through the landform in a northwest-southeast direction. The northern and higher parts of the valley forms are now predominantly dry, but further south, the Rivers Tarrant and Allen flow southwards, and are tributaries of the River Stour. Both rivers meet the River Stour outside the study area, the Tarrant meets the Stour south east of the town of Blandford Forum whilst the Allen and Stour meet on the southern edge of Wimborne Minster. Further east, the Allen River and the River Crane, flow south eastwards, converging with the River Avon. Map 3 shows the topography and hydrology of the area.

### Geology and Geomorphology

The Landscape Partnership area is dominated by a tract of chalk, a rock which has formed the distinctive landforms of the open downland and framing scarps.

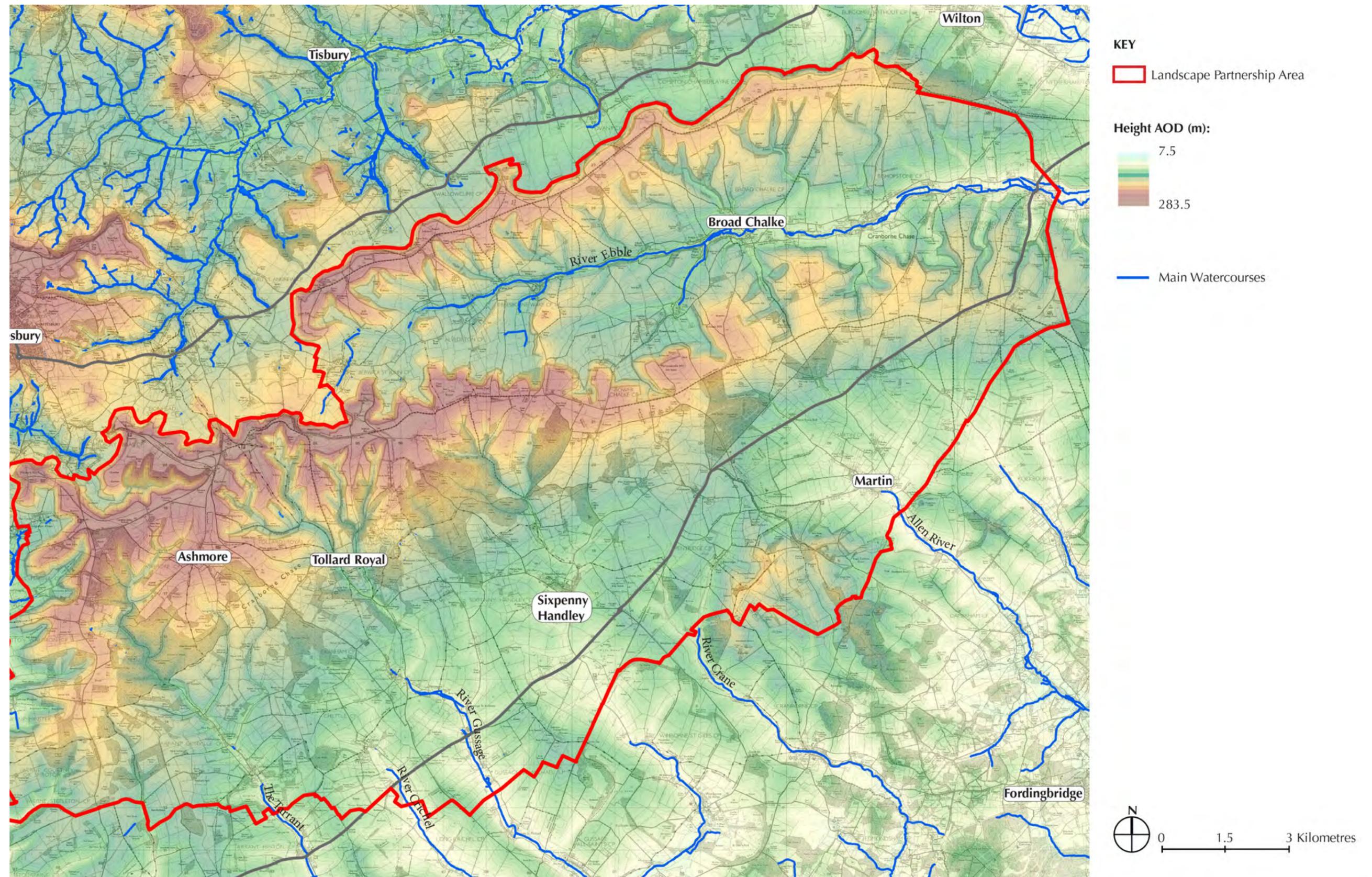
In summary, the chalk beds were formed some 100 million years ago. Embedded within the chalk are flints which have been formed at different periods during and after the deposition of the chalk. These areas are particularly prominent in the surface geology to the north west of Broad Chalke, and also in a broken band from the south of Ashmore, through Vernditch Chase to the south of Coombe Bissett Down. A major feature of the chalk geology is the chalk escarpments caused by tectonic and geomorphological processes. In places through the centre of the study area, along the southern sides of the River Ebble Valley, the white chalk subgroup, which forms much of the bedrock of the study area, is interspersed with areas of grey chalk, gault formation and upper greensand formation. The surface geology in this area also includes river terrace deposits along the River Ebble valley, and in the river valleys which run southwards in the south of the LP area.



The highest parts of the chalk downs in this area, notably the ridge to the north of the River Ebble, represent the remains of a once extensive chalk surface. In the Ebble Valley, the removal of weakened chalk has created a broad chalk valley. High points in the LPS area include Win Green at 227m, Melbury Hill in the west at 263m and White Sheet Hill at 242m. The lowest areas include the wide valley to the east of Coombe Bissett, at 56m, and the valley south of Gussage St. Andrew, at 57m. Map 4 shows the geology of the area.



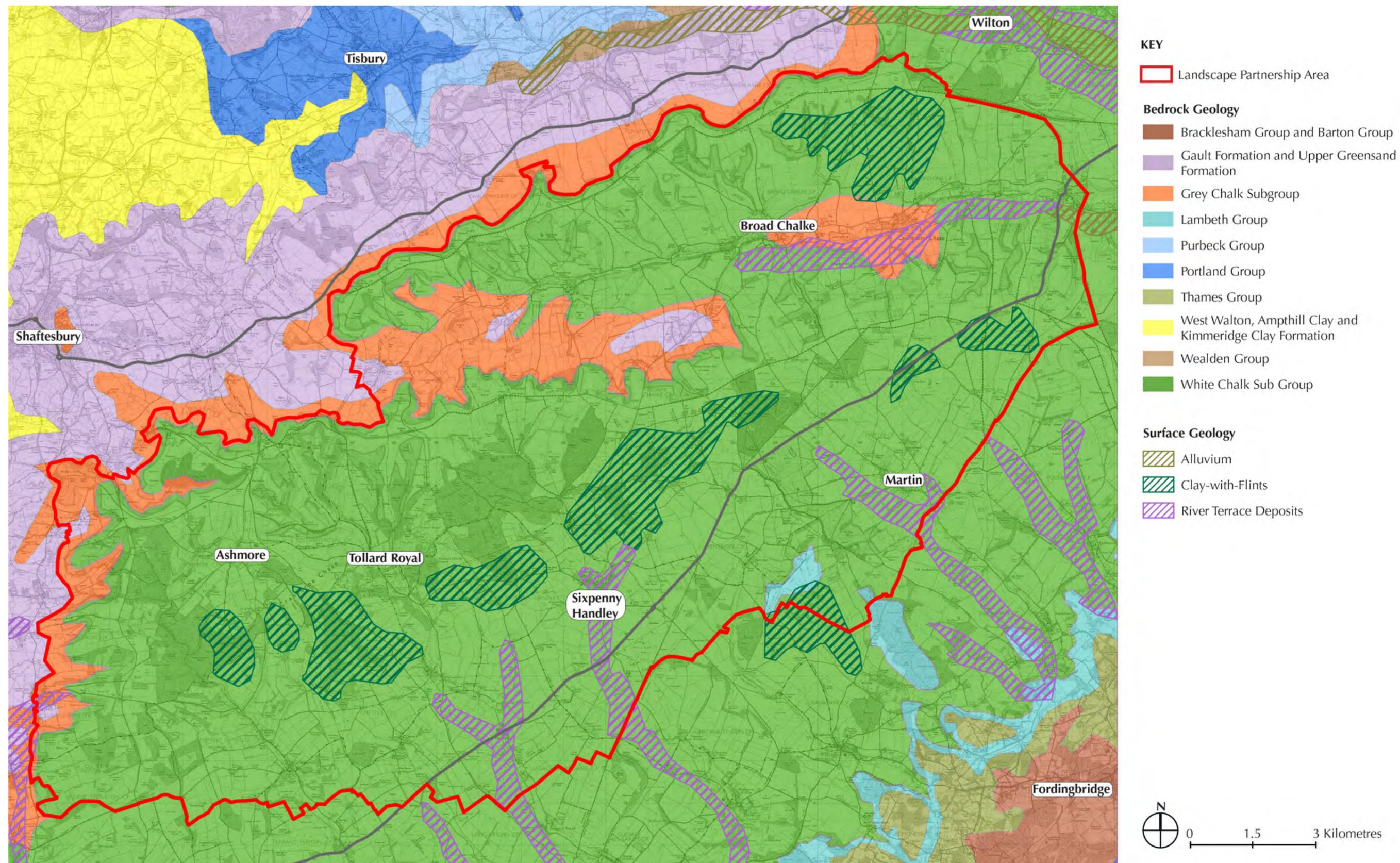
Map 3 - Topology and Hydrology



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Map 4 - Geology



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## HISTORIC LANDSCAPES

*“Curiously marked with barrows, lynchets, and other mysterious mounds and depressions, where sheep have been pastured for a thousand years without obscuring these chance hieroglyphs scored by men on the surface of the hills”*

*Hudson 1910*



▲ Wood engraving of Malacombe Bottom © Howard Phipps

### How the Landscape Developed Throughout Time

The countryside we see today is an expression of the interaction between people and the landscape over the millennia. What is unique about the landscapes of the Cranborne Chase and Chalke Valley is that they exhibit a remarkable time depth not seen in other places. These landscapes bear the imprint of successive eras of human activity and settlement. Evidence from every epoch is written into the landscape or can be seen as finds in the local museums. This is one of the archeologically richest and most closely studied parts of prehistoric Wessex.

Cranborne Chase is an area well known for its high number, density and diversity of archaeological remains. These include a rare combination of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age sites, comprising one of the largest concentrations of burial monuments in England, the largest known cursus (a linear ritual monument) and a significant number and range of henge monuments (Late Neolithic ceremonial centres). Other important remains include a variety of enclosures, settlements, field systems and linear boundaries which date throughout prehistory and into the Romano-British and medieval periods.



However, the key to the unique historic character of the CCCV LP area is the history and legacy of the Cranborne Chase, as a hunting landscape in the Medieval period. The Chase was a defined area with a delimited boundary belonging to the crown or important nobles (including at various times the Earls of Pembroke and Norfolk). The crown or magnate in question did not own all the land within the Chase rather they owned certain ‘rights’ over it. It is these ‘rights’ which have had such an impact on the landscape we see today.

Chase law upheld the primacy of the beasts that were hunted (deer); not only were the beasts themselves preserved but also their habitat. This gave the Lord of the Chase control over the activities of other landowners, including their rights to cut timber, enclose land, and graze domestic animals. However other activities were allowed as long as the deer and its habitat was protected, for example the rights of pannage; often these were ancient common rights which were maintained much longer than in other areas. This status quo remained until the Chase was finally disenfranchised in 1829, protecting the landscape from the worst rigours of the Enclosure Acts, for example.

These ‘hunting rights’ and the late disenfranchisement of the Chase have had a lasting impact on the character of the CCCV LP landscape seen today:

- The special laws which governed the hunting areas meant that land was enclosed and woodland cleared later than in surrounding areas and therefore remained open, unenclosed and actively afforested.
- The restriction of certain activities by hunting law meant that ancient woodland was retained.
- Ancient landscapes were preserved into the Modern period, including for example early fields and remnant common land.
- There is an important legacy of deer parks in the landscape, either surviving as archaeological earthworks or converted into Post Medieval landscape parks.
- Other features associated with the management of the hunting areas survive, including lodges.
- The successive Lords of the Chase in the Post Medieval period enhanced their status through the purchase of great estates and the creation of landscaped parks and great houses.

It is this unique landscape history which is responsible for the survival of the strength of the historic character of the area and the continued existence of key habitats including chalk grassland and ancient woodland, the number of lodges and large estates and the late enclosure of open chalk downland. Map 5 shows the historic landscape character of the present day landscape.



▲ Riding © D. Blake



▲ Fallow Deer © D. Blake



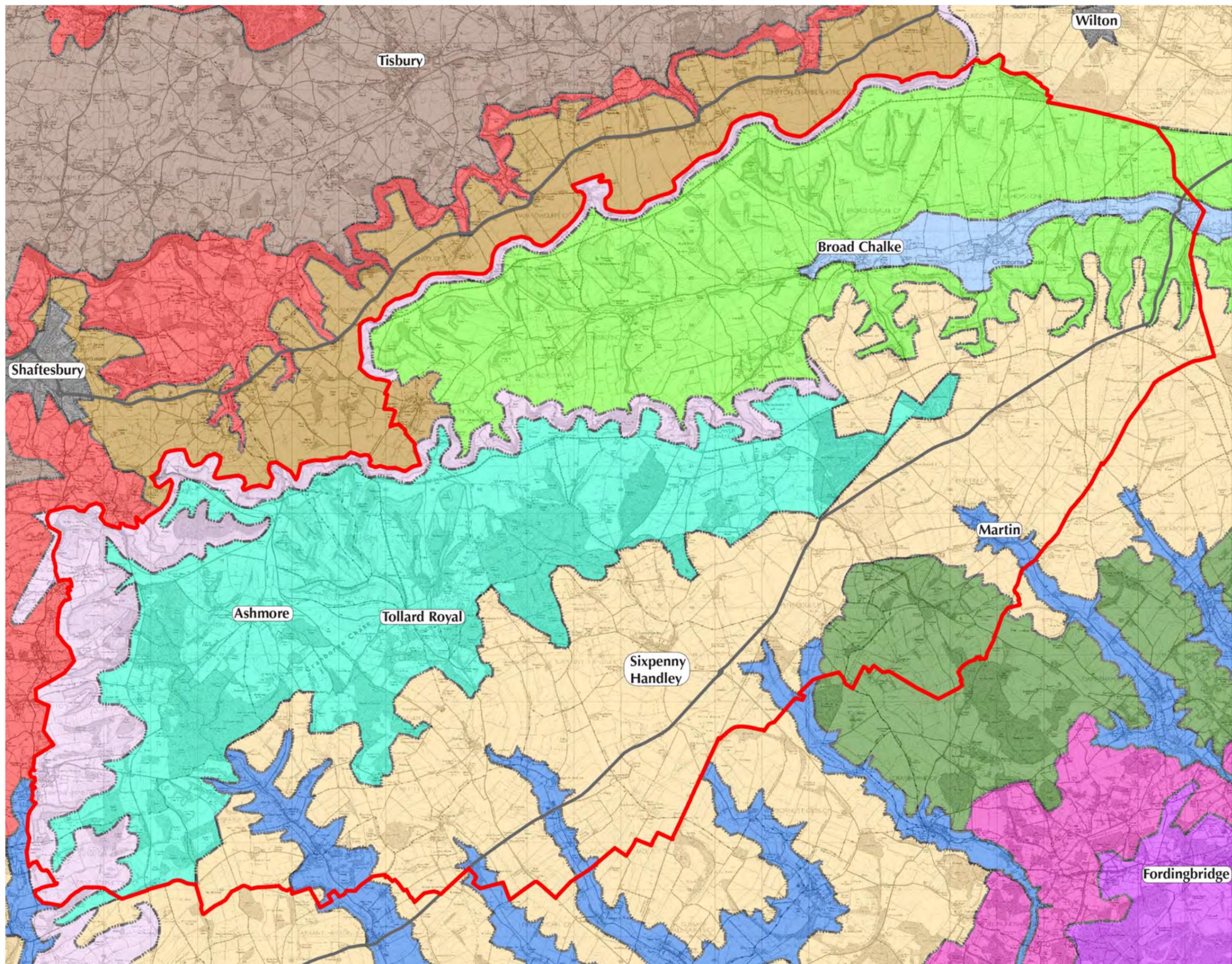
▲ Game shooting © D. Blake



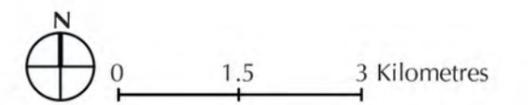
▲ Flower rich chalk grassland



Map 5 - Historic Landscape Character Types



- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
- Landscape Character Types:**
- A Wooded Chalk Downland
  - B Chalk Escarpment
  - C Open Chalk Downland
  - D Downland Hills
  - E Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes
  - F Broad Chalk River Valley Floor
  - G Narrow Chalk River Valley
  - H Greensand Terrace
  - I Greensand Hills
  - J Rolling Clay Vale
  - K Rolling Farmland / Woodland Mosaic
  - L Forest Heath Mosaic



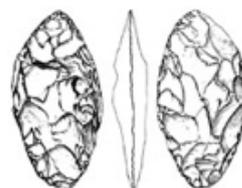
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## Brief history of the Landscape Partnership Area

The earliest evidence of human activity in the landscape of the CCCV LP area dates from the Palaeolithic period (500,000 – 8,000 BC). Hominins (the ancestors of modern humans) were hunter gatherers living off wild plants and animals. The main evidence that survives from this period is the flint hand axes they used. These are recovered as single finds in the landscape.

The Mesolithic or 'Middle Stone Age' period (8,000 – 4,000 BC) is a period of transition from the way people were living as hunter-gatherers to the development of farming. The development of specialised stone tool kits at this time often included very small worked blades called microliths. Evidence for human activity in this period is mostly restricted to scatters of flint tools with clear concentrations on the clay with flints on the Cranborne Chase.



▲ Drawing is typical Mesolithic stone tool

(Attribution Jose-Manuel Benito Alvarez licensed for reuse under a Creative Commons license.)

The Neolithic period (4,000 – 2,500 BC) is marked by the first origins of farming and the introduction of domesticated animals and plants. However, agrarian landscapes were later to develop and there is no evidence for Neolithic field systems within the LP area. The most striking features from this period are the great ceremonial monuments which were constructed throughout the CCCV LP area. These include the great **Dorset Cursus**, which at over 10kms in length, is the longest of its kind in the country. It is likely that this monumental earthwork became a focus for seasonal ceremonial gatherings both during and long after its construction.



▲ Tree covered long barrow, Bokerley Down

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Other important features include Neolithic Long Barrows, communal burial places for the dead often placed in prominent positions; Causewayed Enclosures, concentric rings of banks with external ditches with regular breaks or causeways; and Henges, circular banks with internal ditches with one or more entrances.

The Bronze Age (2,500 – 700 BC) is marked by the beginnings of metal working in copper, gold and bronze. The early Bronze Age also sees the introduction of new burial practices with single inhumations placed beneath mounds of earth called Round Barrows often associated with grave goods including metal objects. By the Middle Bronze Age the landscape of the area was defined and bounded by extensive field systems. There are a noticeable concentration of Bronze Age round barrows on the edge of Rushmore Park.



▲ Ackling Dyke Round Barrows

The start of the Iron Age (700 BC – AD4 3) is traditionally marked by the first use of iron for tools, weapons and ornaments. Imposing Iron Age Hillforts appear in the landscape often placed in prominent positions on the edge of escarpments. They sometimes contain dwellings and pits within their interiors. Although, obviously designed to make an impact on the landscape, modern interpretations see these earthworks playing a domestic role (settlement, trade, agriculture) rather than being purely for defence. Examples of visually prominent Iron Age hillforts can be seen on the Fovant escarpment and the Melbury to **Winklbury Hill Escarpment**.



▲ Winklbury Hillfort



Another key feature thought to have originated in the Bronze Age or Early Iron Age is **Bokerley Dyke**, a 3.2 mile (5.2 km) bank and ditch near Woodyates. Built as a political and cultural boundary, the dyke would have been a major civil engineering feat of its time as it is equivalent in length to several large hillforts. It subsequently became a Romano-British defensive dyke and today forms part of the boundary between the counties of Dorset and Hampshire.



▲ Bokerley Dyke

The start of Roman Britain (AD 43 – AD 410) in the South West region is traditionally dated to AD 43. The archaeology of the next 300 years is associated with the imposition of Roman culture into Britain. This includes new settlement forms such as Rockbourne Villa just outside the CCCV LP area, and new infrastructure such as roads. **Ackling Dyke**, built by the Romans in circa 90 AD, would have been an important and busy highway for some 400 years with Roman chariots and troops travelling from Old Sarum (on the edge of Salisbury) to the hill fort at Badbury Rings (near Wimborne). Most Roman roads in the UK have been built over but at the section of Ackling Dyke that cuts through the CCCV LP area you can still see how the Romans constructed their roads. What you can see clearly at Ackling Dyke is the raised “agger”. The road runs several feet above the surrounding fields and is much wider than most Roman roads. This construction provided drainage and a rapid transit route across Cranborne Chase but it is also thought that due to its size the construction was intended to impress and intimidate the local population.



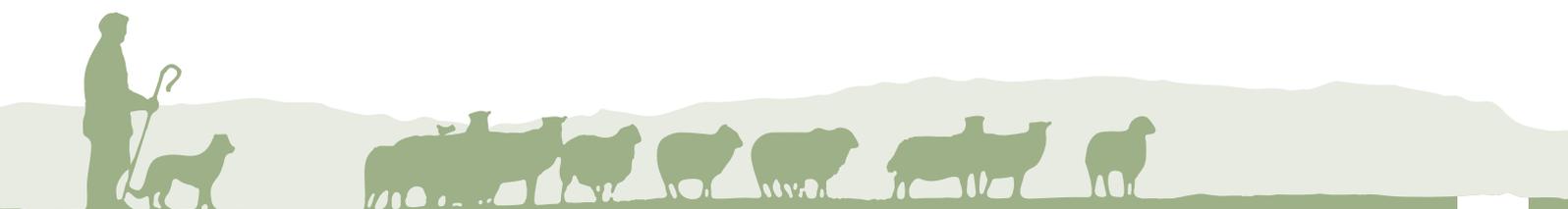
▲ Ackling Dyke @gryllosblog

Throughout the 5th and 6th centuries AD the area became increasingly under the influence of Anglo-Saxon presence and culture and by the 7th century AD the Saxon conquest of the area was complete. During this time the influence of Christianity also increased. By the end of the Early Medieval period (AD 410 – AD 1066) the landscape was divided into a series of estates often dissecting valleys to exploit a range of landscape types.

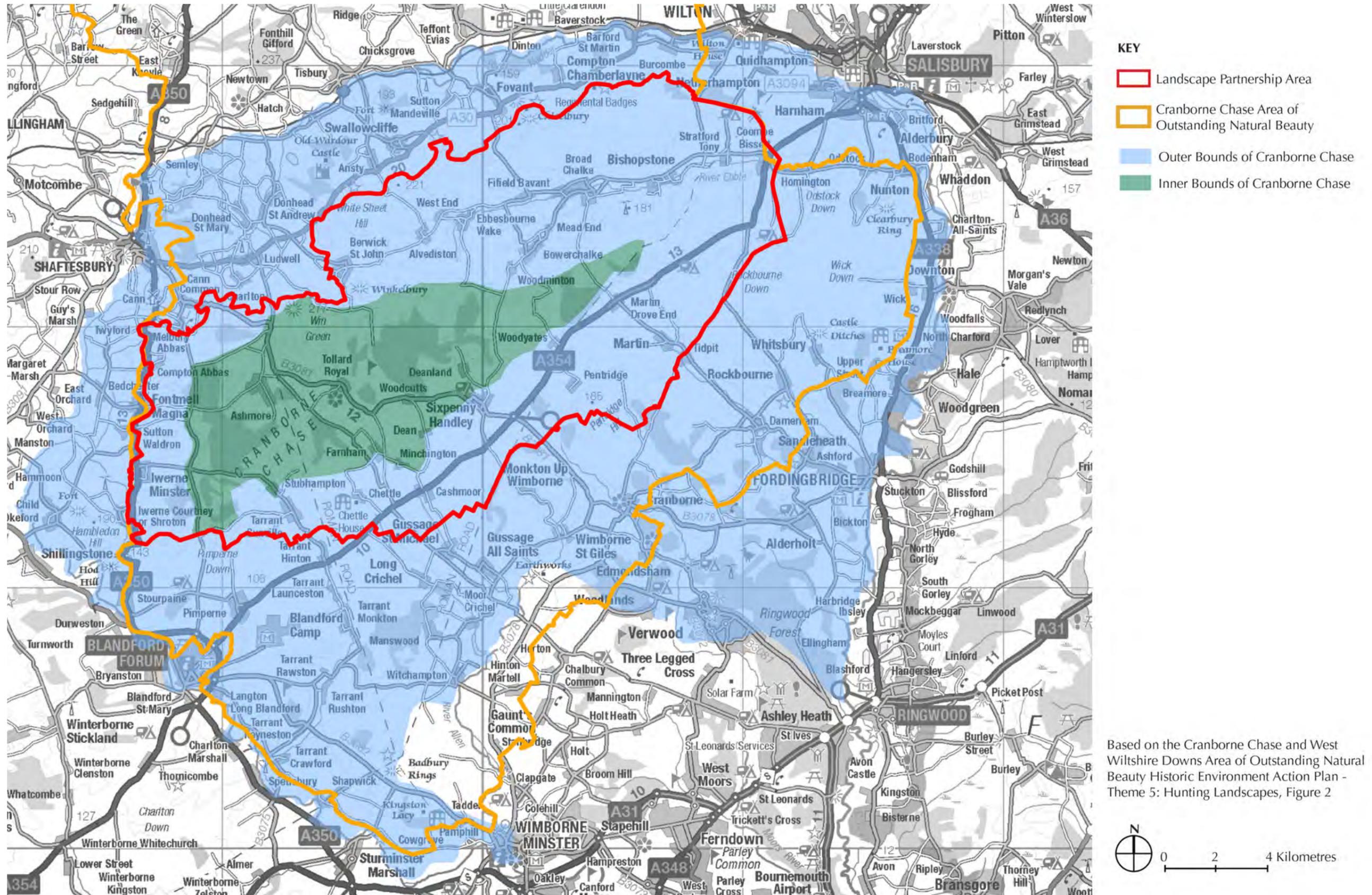
The Late Medieval period (AD 1066 – AD 1485) traditionally begins with the conquest of England by the Normans. The medieval landscape of the CCCV LP area was characterised by a pattern of nucleated villages, with associated manors surrounded by open fields. The Church and nobility were the major landowners and political force and the area was dominated by the establishment of the Hunting Chase known as Cranborne Chase, a geographical name still in modern usage. Map 6 shows the inner and outer bounds of the Cranborne Chase Medieval hunting area.



▲ St Martin's Church, Fifield Bavant ©T.Adams



Map 6 - Cranborne Chase Medieval Hunting Area



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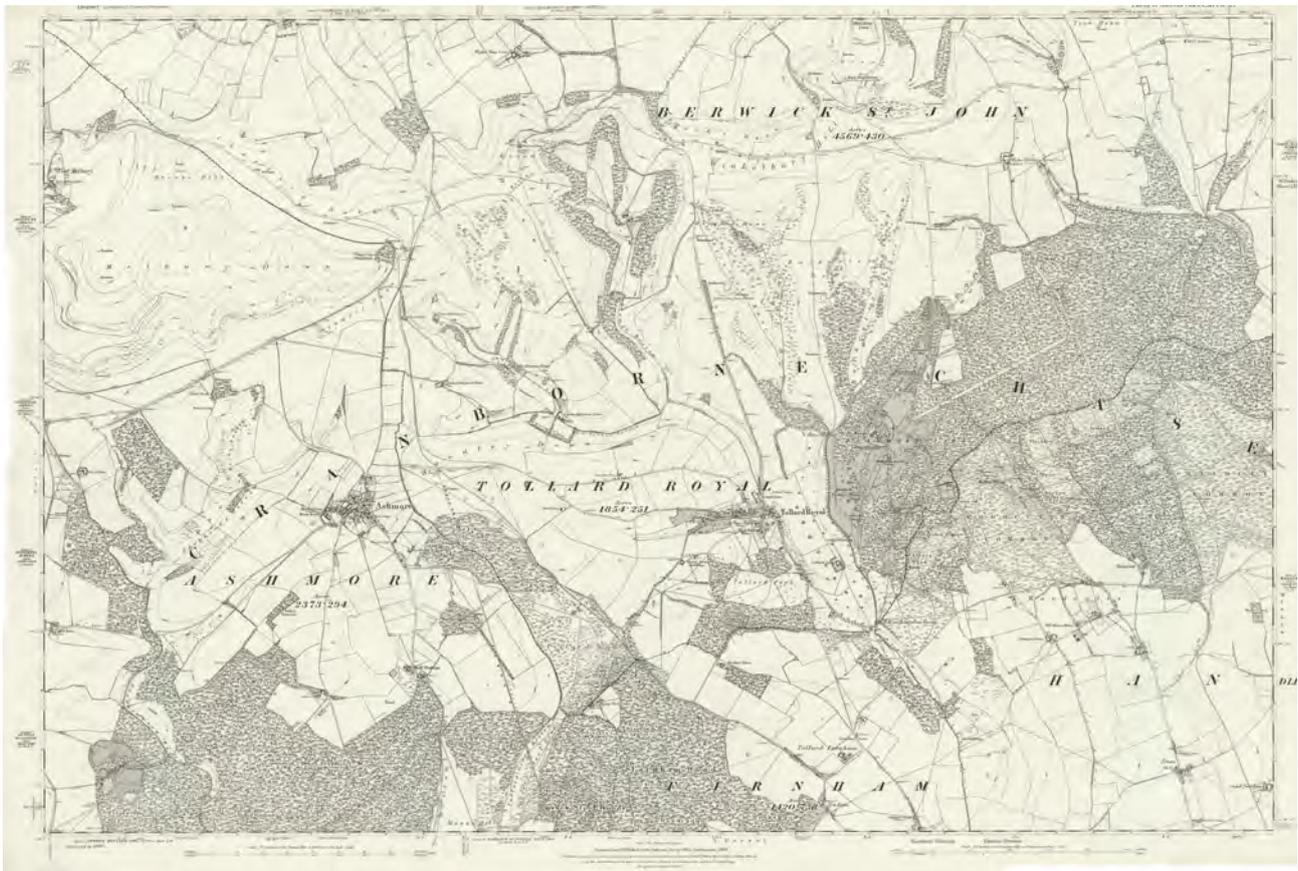


*“a truly venerable tract of forest land, one of the few remaining woodlands in England of undoubted primeval date”*

*Thomas Hardy 1891*

The inner bounds of the Chase straddled the Dorset/Wiltshire border and comprised an area of approximately 40,000 acres. The Chase was governed by special laws that impacted on all aspects of the landscapes management. The Inner Chase, in which the Chase laws were most strictly applied, was split into a series of Walks. These provided the infrastructure through which the hunting grounds could be maintained. There were eight named Walks, and six of these were grouped into the inner Chase bounds forming the heartland of the Chase. One Walk at Vernditch (Broad Chalke) was said to have contained between 1,000 and 1,200 deer in 1650.

### Map 7: 1889 Map of Cranborne Chase



▲ Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

Many of the woodlands of the area have names which reflect their Medieval history and are dominated by old coppices. Coppicing is a traditional method of woodland management in which young tree stems are cut down to near ground level. In subsequent growth years, many new shoots will emerge, and, after a number of years, the cycle begins again and the coppiced tree, or stool, is ready to be harvested again. Coppices were an important economic resource and were used for fuel, including charcoal production, for making hurdles and wattle and thatching spurs.



The end of the Medieval period (Post Medieval AD 1485 – AD 1800) saw the beginnings of the enclosure of the countryside. From 1600 systems of managed water meadows appear. The meadows formed a central feature of the local sheep/corn system of agriculture. They allowed for the artificial control of the watering of meadows using a sophisticated system of hatches, weirs, channels and drains. This allowed a lush crop of grass to grow several weeks before natural grazing became available and allowed for greater flocks of sheep to be maintained, and thus more farmland to be enriched with manure. This enabled much larger flocks of sheep to be sustained on downland fields, as described by **Daniel Defoe** in 1725.



▲ Water Meadows

*“The vast flocks of sheep, which one every where sees upon these downs, and the great number of those flocks, is a sight truly worth observation; ‘tis ordinary for these flocks to contain from 3 to 5000 in a flock; and several private farmers hereabouts have two or three such flocks.”*

*Daniel Defoe 1725*

The great estates began to create formalised landscapes with great parks and gardens such as Eastbury Park, near Tarrant Gunville. Existing trees and woodlands were often incorporated into 18th and 19th century parkland. However, commonly this was augmented by new planting schemes. For example, the avenues of beech planted by General Augustus Pitt Rivers at Rushmore Park in the 19th century. This sometimes formed landscape scale schemes of planting including the now famous fragmented beech avenues in the Chalke Valley created by the Earls of Pembroke.



▲ Measuring one of the many ancient trees



The large scale enclosure of the downlands was captured by Daniel Defoe in 1725 “*But ‘tis more remarkable still; how a great part of these downs comes by a new method of husbandry, to be not only made arable, which they never were in former days, but to bear excellent wheat, and great crops too, tho’ otherwise poor barren land, and never known to our ancestors to be capable of any such thing; nay, they would perhaps have laugh’d at any one that would have gone about to plough up the wild downs and hills, where the sheep were wont to go*”

From the later 18th century some areas of down pasture were converted to arable, and common woods, heaths and grasslands were also enclosed. The rectangular, regular patterns of field systems bounded by hedges on low field banks seen in many parishes today were the result of these later enclosures. Map 7 shows the pattern of enclosure in 1889. They are especially evident south of the Ebble Valley. Many of the ordinary, previously landowning peasantry thus lost rights to common land, and became paid labourers in the employment of larger farms.

During the 18th century there were further changes, partly prompted by the onset of the Napoleonic Wars. There were land improvements and drainage, new crops and breeds of cattle, sheep and pig were introduced. Chalk was often extracted and burnt in lime kilns to produce lime fertiliser. Small chalk quarries are still evident in the landscape. The demands of the navy and industry for timber and fuel meant that many surviving woods and copses were clear felled, or substantially reduced.

Turnpikes built during this period represent the first systematic system of ‘made’ roads across the country since the Roman Road. Created by Act of Parliament the turnpikes of the CCCV LP area remain as fairly legible components of the historic network.

Following the Napoleonic Wars conditions in the countryside for the poor were dire, and town populations grew rapidly. By the end of the 19th century more people were working in industries based in towns than were working in agriculture. Even at the beginning of the 20th century most farm labourers still lived in thatched or tiled cottages with open fires and no running water.

Shepherds often lived on their own on the downs, in wheeled huts, sometimes remaining there even in winter.

The First World War saw further woodland and scrub clearance, and large areas of open downland ploughed up for cereals. Following the end of the war there was increased mechanisation on farms, and farm labouring as a way of life declined rapidly. During the Second World War many areas of downland that had been under pasture for centuries were ploughed up again to maximise arable production. Notable landscape features from this time are the Fovant Chalk Badges. These form the largest group of chalk figures in the UK and are both a SAM and a military monument.

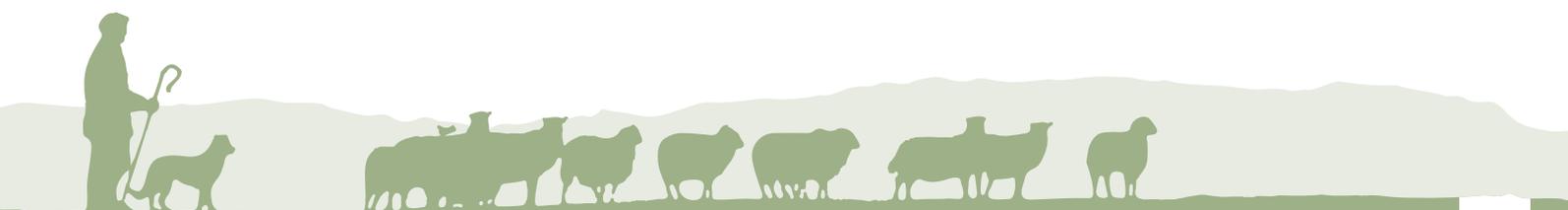
Post-war intensification of agriculture continued with the ploughing of slopes and elevated downland, and the removal of hedgerows and field boundaries to create large scale fields. This resulted in loss of archaeological features and, in some instances, loss of topsoil, and a decline in chalk grasslands and hedgerows, with an associated decline in wild plant, bird and insect species. Various agri-environment schemes have tried to address these losses with mixed results.



▲ Looking NW from Pincombe Down  
Alevidiston ©T. Adams



▲ Shepherds hut



A more detailed description of the archaeology by time period can be found in Background Paper 2 of the Cranborne Chase AONB Historic Environment Action Plans.

[http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk/conserving\\_heap\\_background.html](http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk/conserving_heap_background.html)

### Known Archaeology

The CCCV LP area is notable not just for well preserved examples of individual types of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments but also for the large group of prehistoric monuments forming the ceremonial complex of the Dorset Cusus.

The Dorset Cusus with a date of around 3,300 BC incorporated several long barrows into its length and several long barrows were subsequently constructed with respect to it. It is a nationally important Neolithic monument located near Sixpenny Handley. It consists of a pair of parallel banks (1.5 m tall) running about 82 m apart, with external ditches. It runs for approximately 10 km. It remains enigmatic but the first phase Gussage terminal is aligned on the Midwinter sunset. It is associated with other Neolithic monuments including henges, mortuary enclosures and Neolithic round barrows. It also formed the focus for later Prehistoric activity including large concentrations of Bronze Age round barrows. Map 8 shows the archaeology associated with the Dorset Cusus with a Google earth image of it below.

Map 9 shows the array of know archaeology across the CCCV LP area. There is clearly a lack of records within the wooded areas.

Further information on the history and archaeology of the area and available archives can be found in Appendix 1.

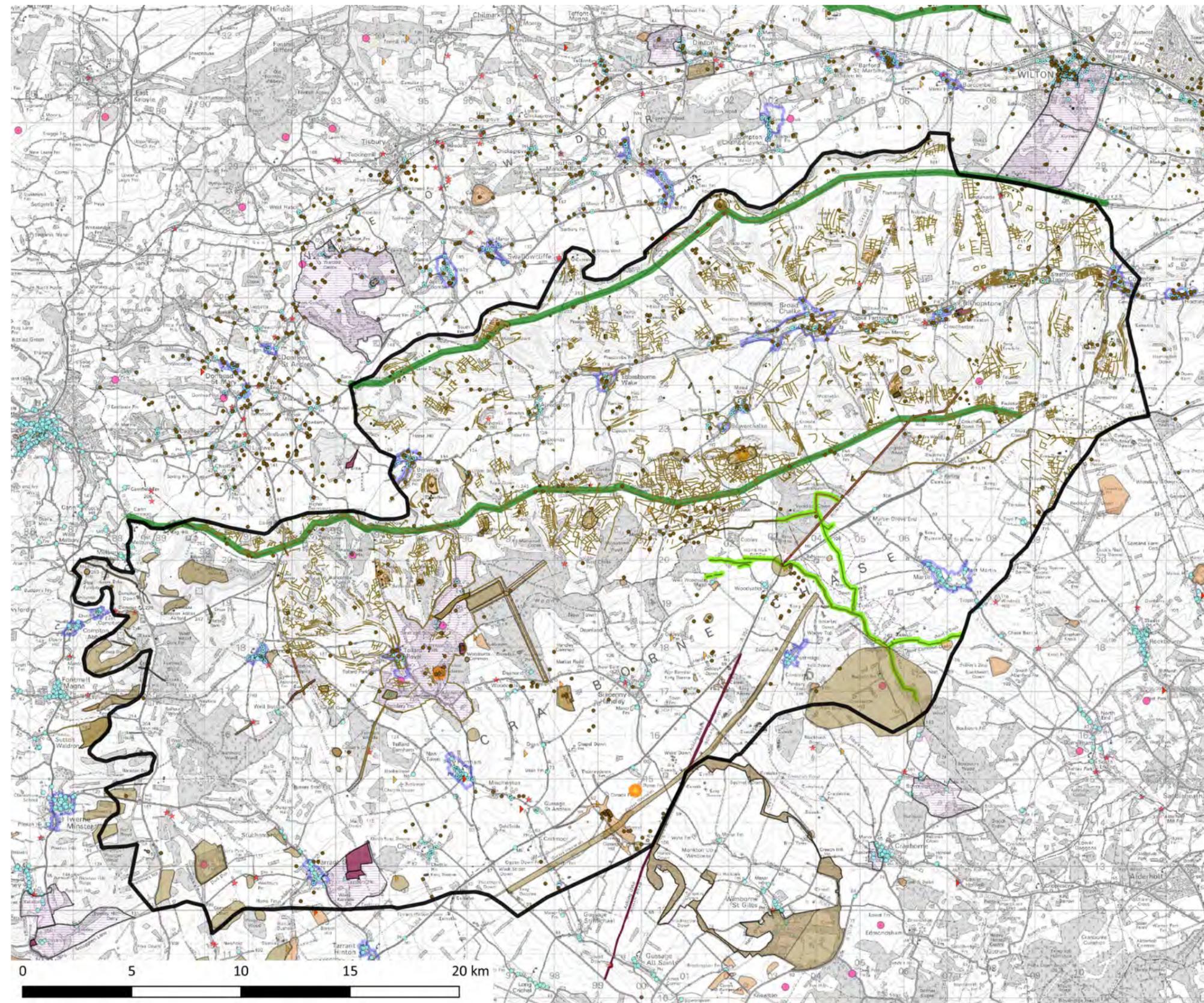


▲ Bronze Age burial of young woman at Down Farm near Sixpenny Handley





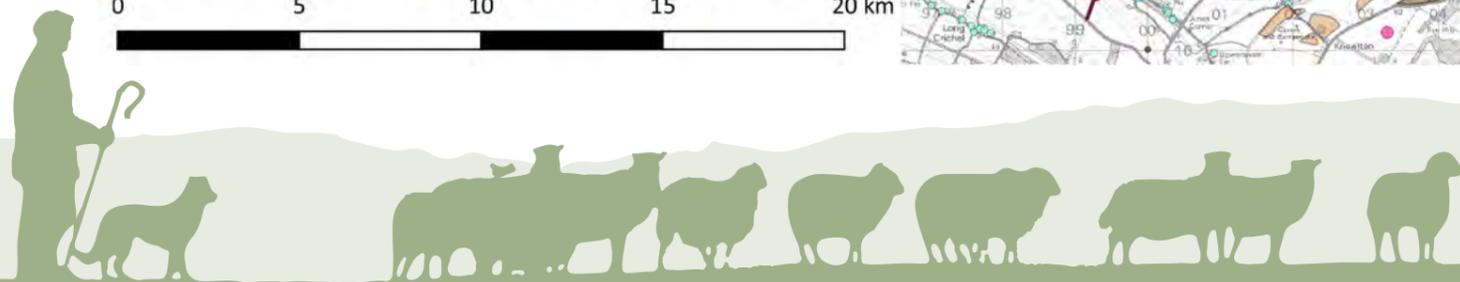
Map 9 - Summary of known Archaeology



**Legend**

- LPS Area Boundary
- County Archaeology SMR**
  - Points (includes finds)
  - Lines
  - Polygons
  - Scheduled Ancient Monuments
  - Historic Garden
  - Registered Parks & Gardens
  - Deer Park
  - ★ All Industrial Sites
  - Droveways
  - Dykes
  - ▶ High Status Roman Settlement
  - ▶ Roman Settlement
  - Roman Road
  - Listed Buildings
  - Conservation Areas
  - Bronze Age Settlement

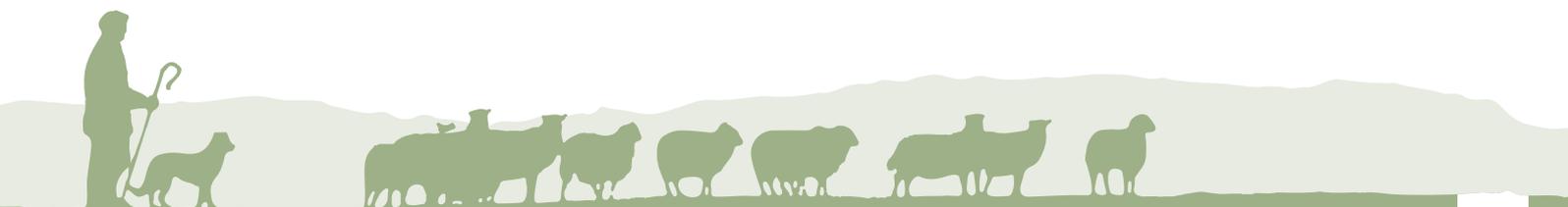
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## Summary of Key Designated Historic Landscape Features

There are 259 nationally designated Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the area. These are dominated by prehistoric monuments. The 342 Listed Buildings are clustered around the core of the historic settlements on the downlands and along the bottom of the Chalke river valley. They include ten Grade I listed buildings and 13 Grade II (including King John's House).

There are 4 Historic Parks and Gardens on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, both the Victorian Pleasure Grounds of the Larmer Tree and Eastbury Park are Grade II\*.



## NATURAL LANDSCAPES



The vast biodiversity interest of the CCCV LP area includes the nationally important aggregation of ancient woodlands of the Cranborne Chase; species rich chalk grassland of international importance; crystal clear chalk streams and rivers; important assemblages of arable plants and birds and significant populations of species such as dormouse, early gentian, orchids, butterflies and bats. The richness of the biodiversity is reflected in the number and size of the designations across the area.



▲ Ancient woodland

### Biodiversity Designations

The study area is of great ecological importance and exhibits exceptionally rich and diverse habitats. It contains a number of sites designated for their biodiversity, both nationally and internationally. Map 10 shows the habitats that make up the CCCV LP area whilst Map 11 shows the various biodiversity designations across it.

### Special Areas of Conservation

The area contains two internationally recognised Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

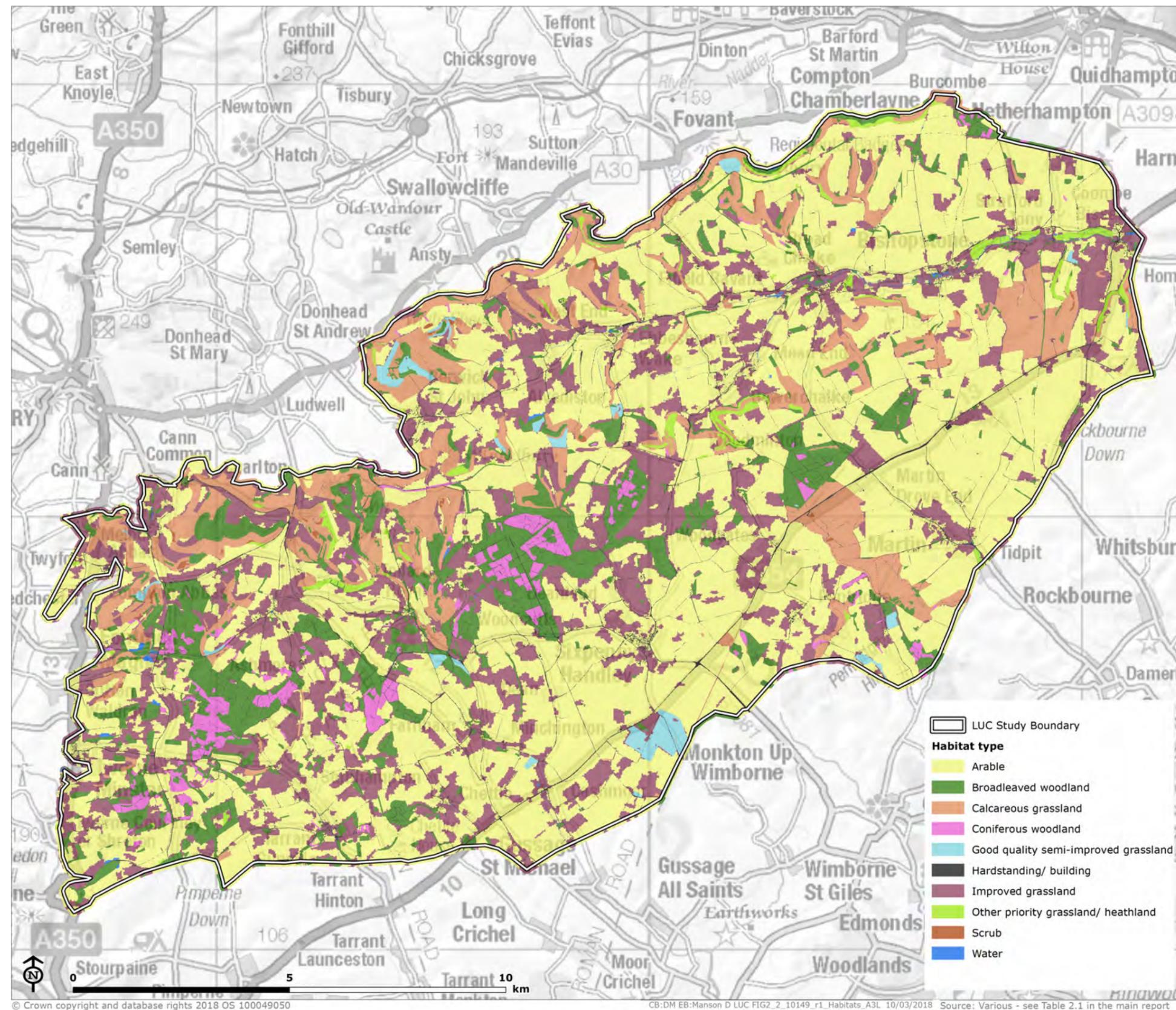
Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC is predominantly located on the chalk scarp along the west of the CCCV LP area. Prescombe Down SAC is located to the north of Ebbesbourne Wake. Both sites comprise large areas of species-rich chalk grassland, and support consistently large populations of early gentian *Gentianella anglica*.



▲ View Around Win Green, Ashmore and Rushmore



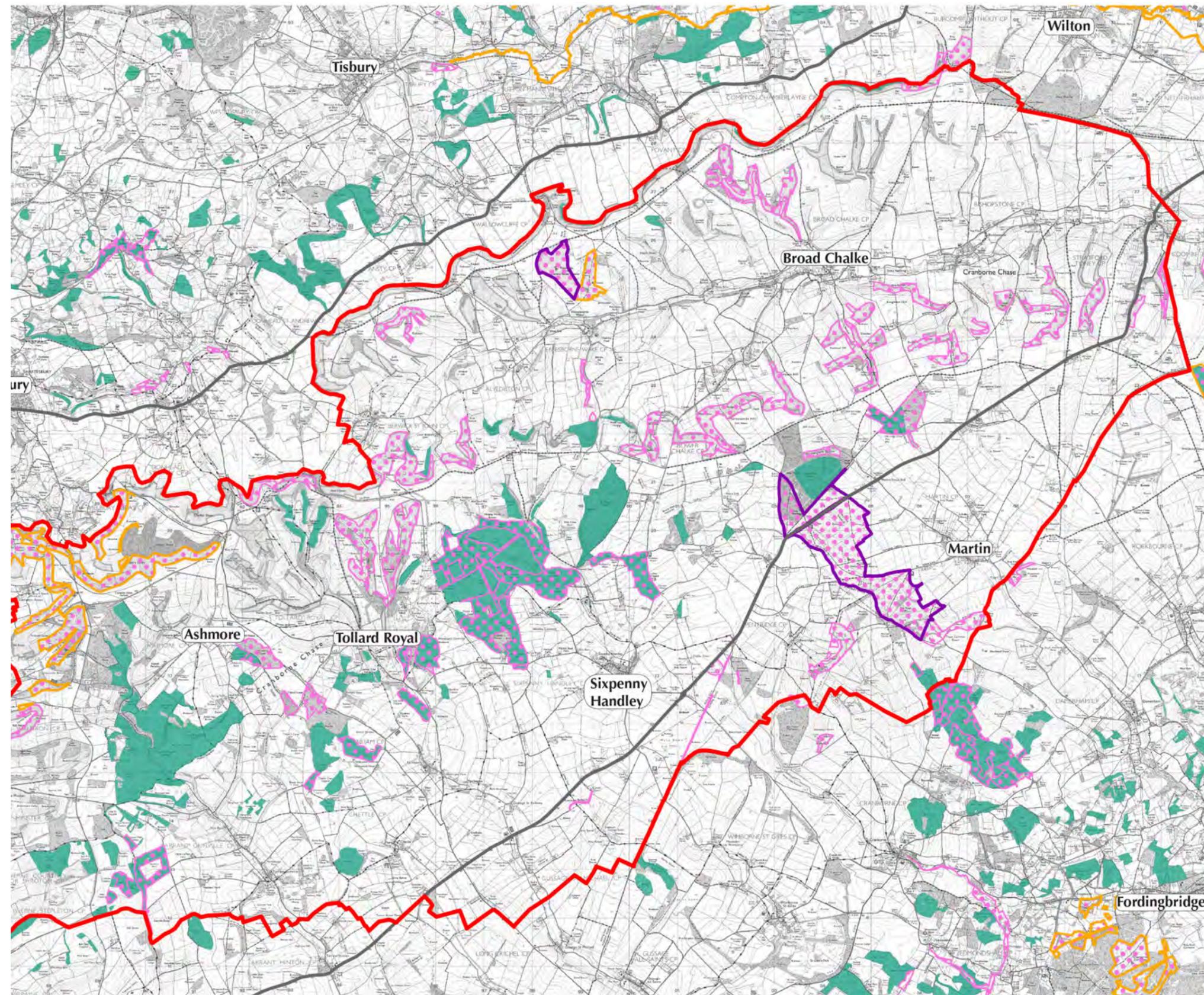
Map 10 - Habitats



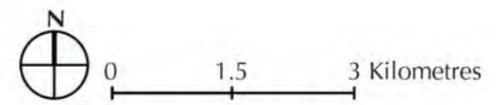
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Map 11 - Biodiversity Designations



- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
  - Special Area of Conservation
  - National Nature Reserve
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest
  - Ancient Woodland



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## Sites of Special Scientific Interest

There are 21 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within the study area. Three SSSIs are designated for their woodland interest, twenty for their chalk grassland interest and one for its diverse chalk grassland, scrub and woodland communities.

## County Wildlife sites

There are 115 County Wildlife Sites within the CCCV LP area covering 2,150 hectares. These include deciduous woodland, chalk grassland, field margins and road verges.

Map 12 shows the condition of the SSSIs, just over 40% are considered to be in a favourable condition whilst just over 54% are in unfavorable recovering or unfavourable no change.



▲ Chalk grassland

## Overview of key habitats

The landscapes and wildlife heritage of the CCCV LP area have been shaped by the decisions of land managers over thousands of years.

## Ancient Woodland

The distribution of woodland habitats is concentrated predominately within the lower two thirds of the CCCV LP area known as the Cranborne Chase. It includes large woods, shelter belts, copses, wood pasture, and woodland clumps creating a series of enclosed spaces or 'rooms' surrounded by trees. A large proportion of these woods are on ancient woodland sites, and although significant areas of these sites have been replanted as coniferous / mixed stands, other plantations are dominated by native broadleaved woodland (particularly beech) and there is also still a significant network of semi-natural ancient woodland blocks; several of which are designated as the SSSIs and County Wildlife Sites.



▲ Veteran tree

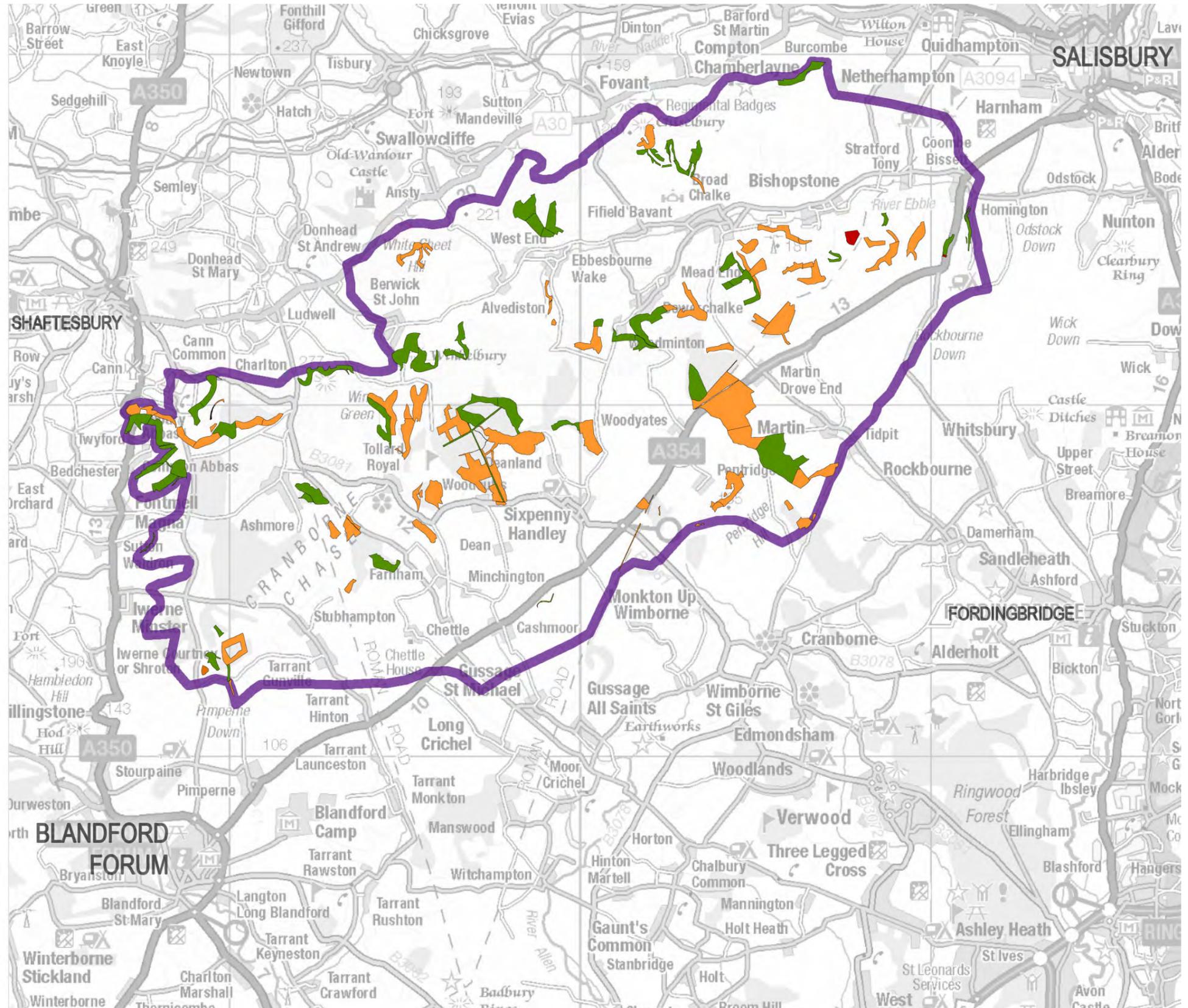
The area is unusually well wooded for a chalk landscape, largely due to its historic management. Saxon charters and landscape studies suggest that up until the 10th century the area was a largely unmanaged dense forest. From the 11th century until its disenfranchisement in 1829 the site was managed as a hunting chase. Deer were maintained at high populations (reportedly over 12,000), and keepers upheld forest laws preventing their exploitation. During medieval times a complex matrix of small areas of wood pasture and extensive coppices developed, depending on local rights to pasture animals or cut wood.



Map 12 - SSSI condition

— LPS Area Boundary

CONDITION	Count	Fill	Percentage
FAVOURABLE	60		42.5%
UNFAVOURABLE RECOVERING	72		53.7%
UNFAVOURABLE NO CHANGE	2		1.5%
UNFAVOURABLE DECLINING	2		1.5%
DESTROYED	1		0.75%



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Commoners were required to fence out deer and stock from newly cut coppice. The distribution of wood pasture can be deduced from older maps and place names, together with rare large pollards, one of which was estimated to be 450 years old, and unpollarded for 300 years at its demise. The species involved include whitebeam, which is practically unknown in pollard form elsewhere in the county.

After the Chase was disenfranchised coppice management was increasingly focused on the production of hazel to provide hurdles for the sheep industry, and less marketable species were removed. Although a decline in the demand for hazel products during the 20th century has resulted in less coppicing and a shift towards high forest, Cranborne Chase remains one of the largest areas of worked hazel in Britain.

The diverse ground flora of these woodlands today reflects differences in soil types and management. Fifty-seven plant species associated with ancient woodland have been recorded in Cranborne Chase, more than almost any other woodland in central southern England. These include greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and butcher's broom *Ruscus aculeatus*, particularly on the drier soils, and bird's-nest orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*, a species which grows amongst deep leaf litter under beech where it feeds on decaying plant remains. Amongst the less common species on lime-rich soils are narrow-lipped helleborine *Epipactis leptochila* and stinking hellebore *Helleborus foetidus*, whilst more acid areas support scaly male-fern *Dryopteris affinis* and heath cudweed *Gnaphalium sylvaticum*.

Cranborne Chase SSSI has an exceptionally diverse lower-plant flora including more than 150 species which grow on the trunks and branches of trees (*epiphytes*). The site has over 160 recorded lichens species, and it is the richest site of its size in central southern England outside the New Forest. Thirteen species are rare in Britain, including *Pannaria conoplea*, a lichen associated with ancient woodland, *Sticta sylvatica* which grows on mossy tree trunks largely in the north and west, and *Usnea articulata*, a formerly widespread species which is now virtually confined to the south-west. The moss and liverwort flora comprises over 80 species. These include the liverwort *Nowellia curvifolia*, a species requiring high humidity and which grows on decaying wood, and the moss *Leptodon smithii* which is associated with tree bark in south and south-west England. The woodlands of the Chase have been recognised by Plantlife as a Special Plant Area for the *epiphytic* and other lichens present.



▲ Rushmore Estate ancient woodland

The structural diversity and complex history of Cranborne Chase contributes to the rich invertebrate fauna. These include three uncommon species of fly: the crane fly *Ctenophora pectinicornis* and the hoverflies *Criorhina ranunculi* and *Brachypalpus laphriformis*. The latter is listed as rare in the British Red Data Book. Over 30 species of butterfly have been recorded. These include silver-washed fritillary, the larvae of which hibernate in tree bark, and subsequently feed on violets *Viola spp* in partial shade, and the uncommon pearl-bordered fritillary whose larvae feed on violets in glades and recently opened coppice coupes. Over 120 species of moth have been recorded including orange footman *Eilema sororcula* whose larvae feed on lichens on oak and beech, brindled white-spot *Paradarisa extersaria* the larvae of which are associated with hazel and hawthorn in oak woods, and large red-belted clearwing *Synanthedon culiciformis*, a day flying moth with larvae which develop under birch bark.

The deer have exerted a major ecological influence on the Chase woodland during the whole of its history and the deer which roam throughout the woodland today are descended from the park herd established using animals from The Chase when it was disenfranchised. Another mammal of note is the common dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* which generally live in older woodlands with a well-developed understory often linked by old hedgerows.



The varied structure and great extent of the woodland also supports important assemblages of birds. Species associated with coppice blocks include nightingale, garden warbler, blackcap, whitethroat and tree pipit. All three British woodpeckers (great and lesser spotted and green) occur, being dependent on large trees for breeding and mature wood for feeding. There are breeding and wintering populations of woodcock. Tawny, little and barn owls breed in hollow trees, and hunt in the woodland and over open country. Breeding raptors include buzzard, kestrel, sparrowhawk and hobby.

Closely associated with the ancient woodlands are wood pastures, boundary banks, floristically diverse rides and hedgerows and ancient and veteran trees. The majority of the latter will be found in boundary features, particularly the ancient hedgerows and roadsides. The longevity of the boundaries, some even dating back to the Bronze Age, makes the hedgerows and woodland strips associated with the boundaries extremely special. This includes the Shire Rack, the county boundary between Dorset and Wiltshire.



▲ Horseshoe bats

## Bats

Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii* is one of the UK's rarest mammals, recorded from only a small number of sites in southern England and Wales. It is considered to be European 'near threatened' species (The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2016).

Its population is fragmented and its sedentary habits mean that it does not colonize new areas easily. There is very little information on population trends, but it is suspected that the species is declining as a result of the loss and degradation of specific types of old-growth woodland, compounded by other threats such as human disturbance. It is suspected that these threats may result in a population decline approaching 30% over a 15 year period including both the past and the future.

There are two major Bechstein's bat winter hibernacula less than ten miles to the north of the CCCV LP area. Chilmark Quarries and Fonthill Grottoes, both of which are SSSIs and form the Chilmark Quarries Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). This site is considered to be one of the best in the UK for Bechstein's bat, barbastelle, and greater horseshoe bats, and supports a significant population of lesser horseshoe bats. The surrounding woodland, grassland and open water habitats provide vital roosting, commuting and feeding areas for these significant populations.

As colonies of Bechstein's bats are likely to live in old broadleaf woodland within 25 miles of the two hibernacula it is very likely that they are using the woodlands of the Cranborne Chase with its mix of Medieval woodlands, ancient and veteran trees, ancient hedgerows and species-rich grasslands.

There has been one attempt to provide additional Bechstein's habitat at Melbury Wood where an underground hibernaculum was made and 'woodcrete' bat boxes have been deployed. The scheme is monitored by the Dorset Bat Group.



## Calcareous Grassland

Chalk grassland is described as a semi-natural habitat as it is created by centuries of grazing on infertile, thin chalk soils producing a short turf (or 'sward') rich in herbs, flowers and grasses. In 1994, Professor David Bellamy described it as "the European equivalent of tropical rain forest" due to the richness of species. High quality grassland, which can support up to 40 plant species per square metre. Species including yellow-wort, common rock-rose, chalk milkwort, and butterflies including adonis blue, chalkhill blue and marsh fritillary, are all characteristic of this habitat and many are not found elsewhere.



▲ Red tailed bumble bee

Historically, the agricultural management of the high chalk downs saw small-scale arable and larger-scale grazing, principally by sheep. Rapid nutrient depletion of the thin soil was countered by periods of fallow, allowing the natural vegetation to recover. From the mid-14th century, sheep grazing expanded as the English wool and cloth industries became pre-eminent in Europe. By the 17th century, the downs' economy was dominated by wool production.

The agricultural depression of the 1870s to 1930s saw arable land returned to grassland for dairying and sheep husbandry. Over the remainder of the 20th century, as the international wool industry declined, agricultural activity turned to arable. Improving agricultural technology brought bigger machines and better artificial fertilisers, aiding increasingly rapid conversion of grassland to arable. The pace of change peaked with wide-scale ploughing of downland during the Second World War, as part of the efforts to feed the nation.

Since the war, trends have been towards greater arable intensification alongside the decreasing use of marginal grazing, to the detriment of the extent and condition of semi-natural habitats – particularly calcareous grasslands, which are now highly fragmented.

The CCCV LP area has some of the best, last remaining and unimproved chalk grasslands in Europe. This occurs within three distinct landscape character types – see The Character of the Landscape page 67 for more information on landscape character types.

- Open Downland comprising broad rolling hills with dry river valleys. Although the Open Downland is dominated by extensive, intensively managed arable fields there are also several large areas of calcareous grassland on Martin Down National Nature Reserve (NNR) and Faulston Down. Covering an area of 350 hectares Martin Down NNR is one of the largest areas of uninterrupted chalk downland in Britain (Salisbury Plain and Porton Down being larger).
- Steep and narrow Chalk Escarpments occur around the upper edges of the Ebbles valley in the north of the CCCV LP area and towards the Stour valley to the west. They have escaped agricultural improvement due to their steep gradient, but are also at risk of scrub encroachment as a result. These calcareous grassland habitats include the internationally important Fontmell and Melbury Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
- The steepest Broad Chalke River Valley Slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland including some important sites such as the Prescombe Down SAC/NNR. This habitat has been lost from the shallower slopes which are now dominated by arable cultivation.



Calcareous grassland habitats in the CCCV LP area are very important for a wide range of species, particularly:

- Vascular plants including important populations of the nationally scarce dwarf sedge *Carex humilis*, endemic species such as early gentian *Gentianella anglica* and a wide range of orchids such as burnt-tip *Orchis ustulata*, green-winged *Orchis morio*, fly *Ophrys insectifera*, fragrant *Gymnadenia conopsea* and twayblade *Listera ovata* and frog *Coeloglossum viride*;
- Breeding birds including skylark *Alauda arvensis*, corn bunting *Emberiza calandra*, yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* and grey partridge *Perdix perdix*; and
- Butterflies including chalkhill blue *Polyommatus coridon*, silver-spotted skipper *Epargyreus clarus*, marsh fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia*, dark green fritillary *Argynnis aglaja* and Adonis blue *Polyommatus bellargus*.
- There are also a number of nationally rare and scarce beetles, flies and bees.

### Chalk Rivers

Chalk streams and rivers are almost exclusively found in eastern and southern areas of England as by definition they flow from chalk groundwater and over chalk geology. They are a result of the unique layers of geology and geography, climate and human history. They are recognised for their high conservation value for wildlife, water supply, and for their recreational and culture value.



▲ River Ebble



The key river influencing the landscape of the northern half of the CCCV LP area is the River Ebble. According to Peter Meers's publication 'Ebbesbourne Wake through the Ages' (2006) the name Ebble may have been named for a man called Ebbel who once owned the land through which it flowed. At various times the river itself has been called the Ebele, the Chele, Chalk or Chalke, or even the Stowford River or Stowford Water.

The River Ebble flows into the internationally important River Avon SAC south of Salisbury, just beyond the boundary of the LP area and forms part of the River Avon Catchment.

In conservation terms the River Avon is one of the most important river systems in the UK, supporting internationally and nationally important assemblages of both habitats and species. Habitats associated with the river include swamp, wet woodland and wet grassland habitats. Whilst the river supports 180 species of river plants, a wide range of river invertebrates and highly diverse fish populations.

The River Ebble flows through the chalk following lines of weaknesses to create a distinctive valley landscape with a narrow valley floor. It is a gently flowing river, falling just 60m over a 16km stretch within the LP area.

Unlike the chalk rivers found further to the east, the Ebble flows through a mixed geology, including gault clays and greensand bedrock which gives rise to a greater variation in flows compared to the chalk rivers in Hampshire for instance. As with most lowland rivers in the South the channel is heavily modified and in-channel habitats are influenced by the numerous structures, many of which have been installed to irrigate old adjacent water meadow systems.

The Ebble displays many classic chalk stream characteristics such as clear water, low soft margins and in-channel plant communities. The latter are an important component of the chalk stream environment, providing substrate and food for invertebrates, maintaining stream depth and providing cover for fish.

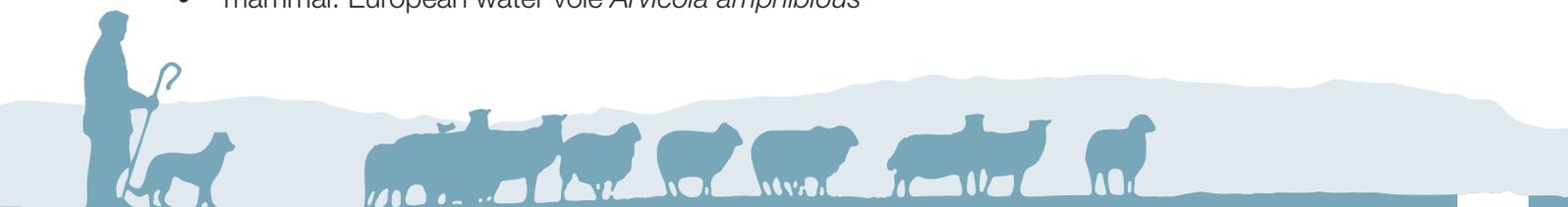
While there are no species which are endemic to chalk streams, these rivers provide optimal habitat for a number of England's iconic and indicator species. In their healthy state, chalk stream flows are:

- clean – excellent for trout and salmon;
- alkaline and high in calcium carbonate – excellent for invertebrates;
- cool and well oxygenated – excellent for fish fry;
- consistently strong – excellent for macrophytes such as water crowfoot

Chalk river systems are ground water fed and therefore typically have very high water quality, which helps to support highly diverse communities including many rare specialist species.

For the River Avon river system, important species assemblages include:

- aquatic plants: particularly *Ranunculus sp.*; *Calitriche sp.*; and Potomageton sp. communities, which also support nationally scarce species such as river water dropwort *Oenanthe fluviatilis*
- aquatic invertebrates: including mayflies; gastropods and molluscs such as pea mussel *Pisidium tenuilineatum*; large-mouthed valve snail *Valvata macrostoma* and desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*
- breeding birds: including kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*; reed warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*; and Cetti's warbler *Cettia cetti*
- fish: including sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*; brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*; Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*; bullhead *Cotto gobius*.
- crustacean: White clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*
- mammal: European water vole *Arvicola amphibious*





▲ Scarce Chaser - © V Moore WCSRT

The River Ebble has a reputation for being a first class wild trout (*Salmo trutta*) fishery. It has been designated as a wild fish protection zone under the provisions set out in the National Trout and Grayling Fisheries Strategy. This effectively means that it has been recognised that stocking the river with fish is both unnecessary and potentially damaging and any future applications to introduce fish are unlikely to be consented by the Environment Agency.

The valley also supports a range of associated riverine habitats and is of significant ecological interest. This includes areas of floodplain grazing marsh (particularly in areas of former water meadows) and small riparian blocks of wet woodland. These habitats predominately occur within the Broad Chalke section where the floodplain is wider.

Field boundaries in the valley include native hedgerows and a scattering of hedgerow trees. Small woodland belts and scattered trees are a feature of the valley bottom, for example willows and poplars line the narrow floodplain and are conspicuous along the course of the river. Historic components of the landscape include water meadows and cress beds.



# Arable

## Arable Plants

The decline of species associated with arable farmland has been well documented. Over the last 30 years many bird species associated with lowland farmland have declined substantially in both range and population size.

A range of plants, previously considered weed species, such as Corn buttercup (*Ranunculus arvensis*), and Shepherd's needle (*Scandix pectenveris*) have also undergone significant declines due to changes in agricultural practices over the last 60 years such as the development of faster maturing crops, increased efficiency of modern herbicides, and greater use of nitrogen. Arable land supports a large proportion of Britain's most endangered plants

The Cranborne Chase AONB is a nationally important area for rare arable plants and farmland birds due to a combination of habitat, landscape and sympathetic management by farmers and landowners. A recent study ('Assessing the distribution of arable plants across the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty', Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and Simon Smart) examines the distribution of declining arable plants within the Cranborne Chase AONB. The study identifies the distribution of declining arable plants and highlights the known priority 'hotspots'. It used habitat measures (landcover, elevation, aspect & soil) and historical land use data (Historic Landscape Character) to identify areas where the physical conditions make it likely that uncommon arable plants may be found, even if current plant records are limited.

Within the CCCV LP area, the Chalke Valley and area either side of the A354 are known as arable plant 'hot spots' for the known distribution of important arable flora. While areas to the south and west of Tollard Royal are 'Arable Flora Target Areas' where it is likely that arable flora are present.

Rather than being evenly distributed across a landscape, the distribution of arable plants shows a complex relationship with soil type, topography, climate and land use. Variation in these factors leads to particular communities of species associated with particular areas or even sites as localised as a single field corner. The study above identified free draining, shallow soils as being particularly associated with more diverse/uncommon arable plant communities. These thinner soils are generally of low fertility which commonly supports thinner crops. Thinner crops provide more opportunity for arable plants to grow with less competition from the crop within in which they are growing.



▲ Red Hemp Nettle - © T Adams



▲ Pyramidal orchids - © T Adams



▲ Field scabious - © T Adams





▲ Field of poppys © T Adams

On lime-rich soils overlying chalk it is likely that these plants are in the following communities *Anagallis arvensis-Veronica persica* community (NVC stand types OV15), *Legousia hybrida* community (sub38) or (*Papaver rhoeas-Silene noctiflora* community (OV16). Both Pheasant's eye, *Adonis annua*, and fine-leaved fumitory, *Fumaria parviflora*, occur in these communities and a wide range of other more widespread species such as sharp-leaved fluellen, *Kickxia elatine*, roundleaved fluellen, *Kickxia spuria*, field madder, *Sherardia arvensis*, small toadflax, *Chaenorhinum minus* and dwarf spurge, *Euphorbia exigua*.

The slightly acid sandy soils are likely to support *Chrysanthemum segetum-Spergula arvensis* community (NVC stand type OV4a), which is characterised by corn marigold, *Chrysanthemum segetum* and weasel's-snout (or lesser snapdragon), *Misopates orontium*, with other species including corn spurrey *Spergula arvensis* and dwarf mallow, *Malva neglecta*.



## Arable Birds

The decline in farmland wildlife has been well documented over the last forty years. Every year Defra releases the latest figures of all wild birds being monitored including the 19 bird species which make up the farmland bird index. In the South West, bird numbers fell by 45% between 1970 and 1994, and a further 8% between 1994 and 2007. Examination of the 1970 – 2013 data reveals interesting trends. The population trend of seven species, 'the generalists', remains largely unchanged whereas the 12 'specialists' show steep declines; they are dragging the farmland bird index down. The specialists include: corn bunting; tree sparrow; turtle dove; grey partridge; lapwing; linnet; skylark; starling; stock dove; goldfinch; whitethroat and yellowhammer.

The Cranborne Chase AONB was selected as one of four project areas within the Natural England led South West Farmland Bird Initiative (2009 – 2015) due to its concentration of farmland bird species. This initiative was designed to reverse the decline in numbers of six bird species associated with arable farmland which had declined the most namely: corn bunting; grey partridge; lapwing; tree sparrow; turtle dove and yellow wagtail. By adopting measures specific to the species above, other less specialist birds such as skylark, yellowhammer and linnet were likely to benefit.

The South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Advisor worked with farmers to provide key year-round bird habitat; safe nesting areas, summer insect food and winter seed food. Work continues with these and other farmers on wider farm conservation projects.

The iconic turtle dove *Streptopelia turtur* has become increasingly rare following rapid and sustained population declines. One cause of the decline is thought to be lack of seed and grain as food during the breeding season, resulting in a much shorter breeder season with fewer nesting attempts. The species is now included on the Red List of conservation concern.

Martin Down National Nature Reserve (NNR) on the border of Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset is one of the only areas where turtle dove occur in any number in these counties. They have been regularly breeding here with up to 12 pairs recorded over previous years. The Cranborne Chase AONB Farm Conservation Advisor is working with local landowners to create small areas of foraging habitat to increase food availability for the birds when they return from Africa in late spring.



▲ Corn bunting



▲ Yellow wagtail



▲ Tree sparrow



▲ Lapwing



▲ Turtle dove





▲ Brown Hare -© David Blake

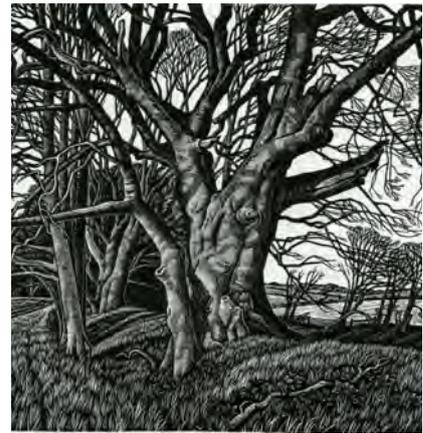
### Arable Mammals

Two species of mammal are particularly associated with arable farms. Brown hares are abundant across Wiltshire and seem to favour areas such as wild bird seed mixes and fallow plots. Farmers report an increase in numbers seen but it is not known if this is as a direct result of the farmland bird project. Harvest mice are an under-recorded species so their status across the south west is uncertain. However there is a considerable area of unharvested cereal crops grown within the CCCV LP area for birds to eat which would offer safer areas for harvest mice to nest as they would not be at risk from the combine harvester. Also the decreased use of insecticides in the unsprayed cereal 'conservation' headlands, which are particularly used where there are grey partridge, would result in more insects for the mice to eat.



## CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

*Celebrated by artists, archaeologists, scholars and writers, the name 'Cranborne Chase' evokes an ancient landscape with a rich patina of interrelated natural, built and cultural assets. This is a dramatic, distinctive and historic chalk landscape where 'voices in the landscape' can still be heard. Along with a sense of remoteness and undeveloped rural character Cranborne Chase offers a deep sense of place.*



▲ Ox Drove in winter © Howard Phipps



In natural, historic and cultural terms, this landscape is extraordinarily rich. Evidence of successive eras of human activity and settlements can often be lost, but not in the Cranborne Chase and Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership area. The landscapes of this area offer up evidence of the imprint of man, carved out over the centuries. Prehistoric monuments of national importance, historic borderlands, ancient field systems, droves and routeways all have stories to tell. This is, of course, one of the richest parts of Wessex, the haunt of the eminent archaeologist Pitt Rivers. In this area the interaction of people and the landscape is inextricably linked over time and perfectly embodies the principles set out in the European Landscape Convention.

It is this interrelationship between the physical, natural and cultural features and assets that give the project area its special value. It was a remote area in the past and remains a remote area in modern times. Other locations have some of the individual special characteristics of the Cranborne Chase and Chalke Valley, but not the deep seated visible interrelationship between past landscape history and management, natural and cultural splendour and distinctive landscape character seen here.

In 1910, the writer **W H Hudson** described Martin Down in the Cranborne Chase as a '*wide, empty land, with nothing on it to look at but a furze bush*'. It was, though, a kind of emptiness that 'seemed good for both mind and body'. That sense of isolation, of separateness from the rest of the world, is still present on the Chase, and has always been an attraction for artists and literary folk.



## Literary, Artistic and Cultural Associations

*'It is a bold landscape, an unexpectedly big landscape, with the satisfying amplitude that makes line more important than colour'* Desmond Hawkins

**John Aubrey** (1626-1697), is the first naturalist to record information about the flora and fauna of Cranborne Chase, and forest produce used to make hurdles, baskets and gloves.

**William Cobbett's** Rural Rides first appeared in serial form in the Political Register running from 1822 to 1826 contains descriptions of the chalk river valleys.

The poet **William Barnes** (1801-1886) was born near Pentridge in 1800 and was later a rector and schoolteacher at Mere. He wrote many poems in Dorset dialect and reflected on county life and character. William Barnes, he made a significant contribution to Dorset local history, folklore, dialect and archaeology. William Barnes, Glossary of Dorset Dialect (1886)

**William Chafin**, (1773-1818), who accidentally shot and killed an old lady as a teenager, was master of Chettle House near Blandford. His very readable book provides insights into natural history, traditional way of life, hunting, rivalry between local landowners, and pitched battles between poachers and keepers. William Chafin, Anecdotes and History of Cranborne Chase, introduction by Desmond Hawkins.

**Desmond Hawkins** was a novelist, critic and broadcaster. He was also a keen naturalist and founded BBC Natural History Unit in 1957. He filmed the wildlife of the Cranborne Chase for a BBC World About Us programme and he wrote about the history of the Chase in his book entitled Cranborne Chase.

There has been a long association with the Gardiner family. **Henry Balfour Gardiner** (1877-1950) the English musician, composer, and teacher bought Gore Farm, near Shaftesbury in 1924. His nephew **Rolf Gardiner** (1902-1971) was a founder member of the Soil Association, a keen supporter of the Young Farmers Clubs, a promoter of the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas. In addition to being a practical farmer, forester and an ecologist, he was a folk dancer of great skill. He took over Gore Farm in 1927. Rolf Gardiner's son the English conductor, **Sir John Eliot Gardiner** now owns and runs Gore Farm as an organic farm. The nearby Springhead Estate, which Rolf Gardiner purchased in the early 1930s, was developed as a crafts network, as well as a farming estate. It also hosted much musical activity. The Springhead Trust is now run as a rural centre for creativity and sustainable living.

**Wilfred de Glehn** (1870-1951), impressionist painter lived at the Stratford Tony manor house 1942-1951.

Few writers, however, have captured the essence of the Chase better than the Victorian novelist **Thomas Hardy**.

*'The Chase – a truly venerable tract of forest land, one of the few remaining woodlands in England of undoubted primaeval date, wherein Druidical mistletoe was still found on aged oaks, and where enormous yew-trees not planted by the hand of man, grew as they had grown when they were pollarded for bows'*. Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles 1891

The present day village of Pentridge is believed to have been the 'Trantridge Village' where Tess attends a dance in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles. **Thomas Hardy** was inspired by the Cranborne Chase, and Fontmell Down was acquired by the National Trust in his memory.





▲ Fontmell Down

**Cecil Beaton** was a celebrated English film and theatre costume designer and fashion and portrait photographer. For fifteen years between 1930 and 1945, Beaton leased Ashcombe House, as it was then, at the foot of Win Green. He entertained many prominent figures and artists of the day, including Rex Whistler and Augustus John.

Beaton fell in love with his home at Ashcombe and was supposedly devastated when his lease expired and he had to leave. He spent his summer months here picnicking with friends and strolling across the slopes at Win Green and the Ashcombe Estate. Cecil Beaton is buried in the churchyard in Broad Chalke.

In the churchyard of The Church of St Mary, Alvediston is the grave of **Anthony Eden**, 1st Earl of Avon, who served as Prime Minister from 1955 to 1957. His last home was Alvediston Manor; an 18th century house located not far from the church.

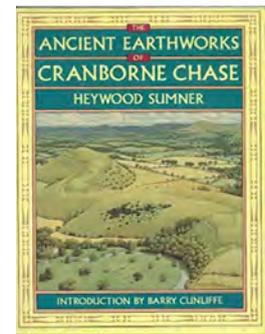
This landscape has inspired many people in many different ways. **George Heywood Maunoir Sumner** was an associate of William Morris, the father of the Arts and Crafts movement, and an endlessly creative designer, painter and, later in his career, a prolific writer. Sumner underwent a swift transformation into a leading archaeologist continuing the high standards of excavation and recording established by General Augustus Pitt-Rivers. At the same time, he vividly described, with an artist's eye, the trees and wildlife which surrounded him during his excavations. Sumner surveyed the prehistoric earthworks of Cranborne Chase, only a bike-ride away from his home at Cuckoo Hill in the Avon Valley.



The results of his fieldwork between 1911 and 1913 were published in a collection entitled **The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase**. These studies of ancient earthworks in the Wessex region included hillforts, enclosures and notable barrows. Sumner's distinctive graphic style is evident in the maps, diagrams and beautiful illustrations of these earthworks. This publication was described by Professor Barry Cunliffe as a masterpiece: *"its meticulous plans are minor works of art, while the descriptions are models of clear observation and precise recording"*.

Sumner's many interests included traditional music, and in 1888 he published **The Besom Maker** and other country folk songs with his own illustrations. He had collected the songs himself (mostly in Hampshire) and so was a pioneer in this field, predating Cecil Sharp by some years. He was a member of the newly formed Folk Song Society.

By the time Sumner died in 1940, he was considered one of the leading archaeologists in the country. By then much of his art had been forgotten, or thought of as "old-fashioned", but that is now no longer the case and he is again widely appreciated.



The combination of accessibility, isolation and dramatic land-forms of the Chase contributed to its becoming a place of retreat for a number of artists during the 20th century. The work of **Augustus John, Henry Lamb, Ben Nicholson, John Craxton, Lucian Freud, Stanley Spencer, Elisabeth Frink, William Nicholson** and over 25 other artists connected with Cranborne Chase, provided the focus of an exhibition at Salisbury and West Wiltshire Museum during 2012. The Museum suggests that artists have found in Cranborne Chase and its hinterland a landscape of inspiration, seclusion and 'bare-boned' beauty.

Other famous people associated with the area include: Paul Nash mid-20th-century landscape artist of Dorset / Wiltshire border; First World War poet **Siegfried Sassoon**; **Eric Ravilious**, (1903-1942), landscape artist of South Wiltshire; **William Golding**, novelist lived in Bower Chalke - locals saw him writing in his summer house; scientist and environmentalist **Dr James Lovelock**; internationally renowned violinist **Iona Brown**, **Desmond Hawkins**, writer and broadcaster; musicians **Toyah Wilcox** and **Robert Fripp**; and Science-Fiction writer **Terry Pratchett** who lived in the Chalke Valley.

The landscape still provides inspiration for wonderful local landscape artists including:

Claire Thomas; Clare Shepherd; Lynda Appleby; Francis Farmer; Mary Fawcett; Clare Hatcher – best Wiltshire artist 2007

Living arts and craftspeople include:

Erica Hemming – rush and cane seating; Anne Marie Marshall – potter; Howard Phipps – woodcuts and other media; collection at Salisbury Museum enlarged with funds from Wiltshire Council Wiltshire Treasures project.





▲ Children painting flags © Mike Johnston

## A Local Craft Industry

Like a number of heritage crafts and skills, information was passed down from generation to generation. The Dorset Button industry was no exception. This particular cottage industry affected the lives of hundreds of families in Dorset for more than 200 years.

The **Dorset Button** began in Shaftesbury, Dorset, probably between the years 1680 to 1700. The first buttons were known as “High Tops” and were made from a disc of horn from the Dorset Horn Sheep. It was covered by a small piece of material and worked with a needle and thread to make a conical shaped button. These buttons were much used for ladies’ dresses.

Other types of buttons were then developed using wire twisted on a spindle with the ends cut and dipped in solder. Children of both sexes were employed as “Winders and Dippers” – others threaded the rings and they were called “Stringers”. Whole families were employed in the button trade in East Dorset at this time and the wire buttons ousted the “High Tops” completely. Dorset buttons were much sought after, not only in Europe but also in the New World. Nearly 1,000 people were employed in this industry.

Depots were set up for receiving buttons. At the Milborne Stileham Agency, buttons were accepted every Friday and it is reported that the place was like a fair ground as the crowds were so great. If you were to ask a native of East Dorset what his work was the answer would most probably be “*I do Buttonly*”.

In 1850 a button making machine shown at the Great Exhibition in London brought a tragic end to the industry - almost overnight the industry was ruined for no hand-made button could compete. Acute distress and even starvation came to the Dorset button makers; from the Shaftesbury district alone 350 families were shipped to the colonies at Government expense.



▲ Dorset Horn sheep



▲ Dorset buttons  
©Henry's Buttons



## Woodlands and Woodland Crafts

Many of the woodlands of the area have names which reflect their Medieval history and are dominated by old coppices. Coppicing is a traditional method of woodland management in which young tree stems are cut down to near ground level. In subsequent growth years, many new shoots will emerge, and, after a number of years, the cycle begins again and the coppiced tree, or stool, is ready to be harvested again. Coppices were an important economic resource and were used for fuel, including charcoal production, for making hurdles and wattle and thatching spurs.



*'Wee have two sorts of them. In the south part, and particularly Cranborne Chase, the Hazells are white and tough; with them are made the best hurdles of England. The nutts of the Chase are of great note, and are sold yearly beyond the sea. They sell them at Woodberry Hill Faire &c. and the price of them is the price of a buschel of wheate. The hazel-trees in North Wilts are red, and not so tough, more brittle.'*

*Aubrey's Natural History of Wiltshire: a reprint of The Natural History of Wiltshire by John Aubrey, introduced by KG Ponting (London 1847; Augustus M Kelly, New York 1969)*



▲ Coppiced woodland

Forest areas were rich in resources for traditional societies. Woodland and vale were interdependent: agriculture in the surrounding chalk valleys utilised the resources of the forest, as did rural crafts and industries.





▲ Hurdle maker



▲ Basket maker

**John Aubrey** (1626-1697), is the first naturalist to record information about the flora and fauna of Cranborne Chase. Venison, rabbit, and hazelnuts helped to feed local populations. They made forest produce into hurdles, whips, baskets, used skins for gloves, and fur for clothing. Farming became more productive in the classic 'Sheep and Corn' system, which depended on hurdles of coppiced hazel to pen the sheep on arable fields, so their dung could manure the thin chalky soils. The development of water-meadows in this area on the Wilton estate belonging to the Earls of Pembroke was part of the 'Sheep and Corn' system. This system traditionally used the Wiltshire Horn breed of sheep, but these were crossed the 'South Down', for a fatter sheep with more wool, the 'Hampshire Down'.

'The parish of Sixpenny Handley', by **Mrs E Hayward** (1969), includes information on hurdle-making; using unripe hazelnuts as dye; traditional cob building; and the chalk and lime pits.

There are records of basket making in Broad Chalke from the 1850s made from osiers grown in the parish, and used for packing watercress. Production ceased in or soon after 1920.



## Folklore

Unsurprisingly, the area is a rich source of ghost 'stories'... Ashmore has its Woman in White, a spectral figure who is said to appear around a former well called Washers Pit. Writing in 1859, **Edward William Watson** relates this story in his book 'Ashmore, Co Dorset: a history of the Parish', telling of her rescue from the noose by a washer woman who had been alerted to her plight by a prophetic dream.

Another intriguingly ghostly tale involves the strange voices of the Gappergennies, bizarre creatures said to have once inhabited the ancient burial long barrow (now destroyed) that was sited by the old cart track until it was dug up to make way for the new road to Fontmell. This is a lonely, quiet part of Ashmore and strange sounds were heard for many years. When the bones found within the barrow were reinterred in the churchyard no more sounds were heard.

At Applespill Bridge, near Bowerchalke, seven ghostly men have been reported carrying a gold coffin over the bridge. The coffin was allegedly stolen from a nearby Briton's barrow and, upon the theft being discovered, the coffin then needed to be hidden. It is said now to be buried somewhere on the Downs at Bowerchalke.

In this area too, it is said that there is a ghost who walks around carrying a bag of jangling coins - usually following people.

Perhaps the area's most famous spectre is the Bronze Age horseman, riding without a saddle, who appeared in front of the eminently sensible archaeologist **Dr RC Clay** one evening during the winter of 1927/28. **LV Grinsell** relayed Dr Clay's experience in his book 'The Archaeology of Wessex'. "*He saw a horseman on the downs to the north-east, travelling in the same direction as himself,*" Grinsell writes, then quoting Dr Clay: "*He galloped along parallel to me about 50 yards from the road. I could see that he was no ordinary horseman, for he had bare legs, and wore a long, loose coat... I suddenly realised that he was a prehistoric man... After travelling parallel to my car for about 100 yards, the rider and horse suddenly vanished. I noted the spot, and the next day found at the spot a low round barrow.*"

Here he found the remains of a round barrow that he had not noticed before, visiting the site the following day and was able to date the barrow as a Bronze Age burial chamber. He began to make inquiries, and discovered that many of the local people had also seen this fierce warrior.

The Romans and the Ancient Britons clashed at Patty's Bottom, a small valley between the two hills in Woodminton, near Bowerchalke. The battle was so fierce, legend had it that the valley ran with the blood of the dead. It has since been reported that, on moonlit nights, tramping can be heard and headless horses can be seen galloping in the area.

Not all the horsemen of the Chase have been ghostly ones. King John frequented the area in the late 12th and early 13th Centuries to hunt deer and boar – King John's House at Tollard Royal, a Medieval hunting lodge, is a surviving legacy of that time.

Delve into the history books and you can discover a far darker, even more shadowy side to the night-dark Chase than even that drawn by Thomas Hardy. The open, rugged, largely people-less landscape offered optimum conditions for highwaymen, poachers and smugglers to thrive, the most infamous in the latter category being Isaac Gulliver. Smuggling became big business for him: he employed a network of people, ran a fleet of coastal vessels and found myriad hiding places for his booty — on the Chase among other places. History shows that a king pardoned him for his crimes and he lived the latter part of his life as a respectable member of society.





▲ Raven and skulls - Clare Shepherd

Gulliver and his team would have traversed the spider's web of ancient tracks and roads that cross the Chase. Maybe if you listen, the sound of their horses' galloping hooves is still audible in the wind, not least along one of the chalky white drove roads, which has been trodden by a hundred thousand feet belonging to the beasts trudging their way in the rain or under a scorching sun to market in Salisbury, their shepherd or oxman traipsing along behind.

There are various versions of the story of Kit, as it has been told and re-told for generations, but it is said that she was a gypsy who committed suicide by throwing herself into a well (now hidden, but to the side of the vicarage). In those days suicides were buried outside of consecrated ground and so Kit was buried on the Wiltshire/Dorset/Hampshire boundary in Vernditch with a three-county corner stone marking the spot.

Other stories do claim that, rather than a gypsy woman, it was a young girl who drowned herself in the well. Whoever was involved in the tragedy, one thing visitors to the spot say is that it can be unearthly quiet and that you cannot hear birdsong.



## General Pitt Rivers's Legacy Lives On

Any history of archaeological investigation in the CCCV LP needs to place considerable emphasis on the work and legacy of **General Augustus Lane-Fox Pitt Rivers** (1827-1900) who after inheriting the estate at Rushmore undertook slow and extensive excavations on sites within the estate and surrounding area. Pitt Rivers was interested in understanding the history of each site, carefully recording stratigraphy and the position of finds. Pitt Rivers also stressed the importance of publishing a complete record of his work, producing beautifully illustrated reports. Pitt Rivers is seen by many as a central figure in the development of archaeology, and even as the father of scientific archaeology. His position as the first Inspector of Ancient Monuments following the passing of the Ancient Monuments act of 1882 is also highly significant.



▲ General Augustus Lane-Fox Pitt Rivers (Reproduced with permission from Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre)



▲ Wor Barrow excavations ©Anthony Pitt-Rivers

But as Bowden (*The Life and Archaeological Work of Lieutenant-General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers*, Mark Bowden 1991 Cambridge University Press) points out in his comprehensive biography of the general: *“However, if for no other reason, the General has had a significant influence on British Archaeology as the excavator of over forty sites including such classics as Wor Barrow, South Lodge Camp and Woodcutts, all of which have been sources of reference and reinterpretation for later researchers”*.

As an early exponent of the role of archaeology in public education the General also founded a museum in Farnham in the former gypsy school, where artefacts from his many digs could be viewed, along with a diverse collection of other items. The museum was finally closed in 1966 and the archaeological collections transferred to Salisbury Museum in 1975.



▲ Model of Wor Barrow excavation 1893-1894 ©Salisbury Museum



In addition to his extensive archaeological digs and recordings General Pitt Rivers held a desire to 'improve the masses'. As a landowner, he created, at his own expense, the Larmer Tree Gardens for the pleasure and recreation of the people of the surrounding neighbourhood. They were one of the first private gardens opened for public enjoyment in the United Kingdom, and were free to enter. They are an extraordinary example of Victorian extravagance and vision.

Extensive lawns were laid, a variety of builds in a variety of styles were constructed, including a bandstand and theatre intended to enlighten and educate his estate workers and visitors. For those visitors wishing to picnic, there were eight areas known as quarters, each was enclosed by laurel hedges and contained a thatched building for shelter. There was also a racecourse, lawn tennis courts and an eighteen hole golf links. He brought in llamas, reindeer, yaks, kangaroos and zebras to live, somewhat unsuccessfully, on his nearby land.



▲ The Larmer Tree Gardens in its Victorian heyday ©Rushmore Estate

The General offered opportunities to experience the arts through open-air theatre, concerts and art exhibitions and by 1899 the gardens were attracting over 44,000 visitors a year. Local men were recruited to spend Sunday afternoons at Larmer Tree playing in the General's Band, sporting specially made uniforms. In the evening the gardens were illuminated with thousands of Vauxhall lights and there was dancing in the open air. "Quite the prettiest sight I ever saw in my life" is how Thomas Hardy described it in 1895. In the last decade of the 19th Century, the General's undertakings made a notable contribution to local life and its economy.

*Thomas Hardy was a visitor to Rushmore House and the poem 'Concerning Agnes' refers to Hardy's friendship with Colonel Pitt Rivers' daughter Agnes:*

*'I am stopped from hoping what I have hoped before —  
Yes many a time! —  
To dance with that fair woman yet once more  
As in the prime  
Of August, when the wide-faced moon looked through  
The boughs at the faery lamps of the Larmer Avenue'*

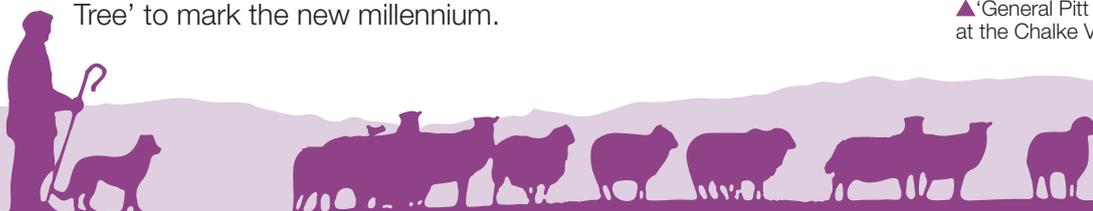
In his later years, the General was dogged with ill health. He was a diabetic and suffered from bouts of bronchitis. He died in 1900 at Rushmore House, which now houses a private school.

Following the death of Pitt Rivers there was a general decline in standards in archaeological excavation and fieldwork. A major exception to this however was Heywood Sumner, a devoted follower of the General who also focused his activities on the Cranborne Chase. Other investigations by amateur archaeologists during the first half of the 20th century were variable in quality.

The Larmer Tree grounds became less popular and fell into decay following Pitt-Rivers death, and some of the structures and buildings have since disappeared. During the early 1990s the gardens and some of the buildings were restored and re-opened to the public. In December 1999, shortly before his death Michael Pitt Rivers, the General's great grandson, planted a new 'Larmer Tree' to mark the new millennium.



▲ 'General Pitt Rivers' makes an appearance at the Chalke Valley History Festival





▲ Larmer Tree Gardens

The Larmer Tree Gardens remain a significant cultural focus in the landscape. In keeping with Pitt Rivers vision for the garden a small number of events and summer concerts are held within the garden throughout the year as well as the larger Larmer Tree Festival.



▲ Larmer Tree Festival



## Local Events

### Mayday celebrations

May Day has been a traditional day of festivities throughout the centuries, most associated with towns and villages celebrating springtime fertility (of the soil, livestock, and people) and revelry with village fetes and community gatherings. Seeding had been completed by this date and it was convenient to give farm labourers a day off. Perhaps the most significant of the traditions is the maypole, around which traditional dancers circle with ribbons. May Day has been celebrated since the 1600s.



▲ Children dancing round the Maypole



## Ashmore 'Filly Loo'

The annual 'Filly Loo' at Ashmore is an ancient festival to celebrate the summer solstice. As the sun sets on the longest day, the Morris Dancers don antlers and perform a haunting Horn Dance, which is thought to be 700 years old. The evening ends with everyone holding hands around the village dew pond for a traditional circassion dance.

In 1956, this old custom was revived by Peter Swann, as a folk dance festival called the 'Filly Loo'. With the cooperation of the Ashmore Folk Dance Club and guests from Warminster, Westbury and other villages in Dorset and Wiltshire the festival has been traditionally held on the Friday evening nearest to the Feast of St. John the Baptist or Midsummer's Day - 24th June.

Villagers are called out to take part in the first dance, led by a Green Man. Dancing continues throughout the evening and by dusk the celebrations reach their climax - a torch lit procession with six antlered deer-men and four other colourful costumed characters: a Maid Marion, a bowman, a hobbyhorse and a fool.



▲ Ashmore Filly Loo



## Berwick St John Country Fayre

The biennial Berwick St John Country Fayre, is a working show that attracts a high number of exhibitors from all over the country and Europe, bringing horses, vintage tractors, full size steam engines, stationary engines, motorbikes, cars, military vehicles, rural crafts and collections. A special feature of the 2018 fair was the display of First World War vehicles, and there was an open-air church service to commemorate the end of the war.

**Melbury Beacon**, on Melbury Hill, was one of a series of fire beacons used to warn of the Armada. It was also lit to celebrate national events including the Silver Jubilee of King George V; 1953 for the Queen's coronation; 1977 for the Queen's Silver Jubilee, and for the marriage of HRH Prince Charles to Diana Spencer 1981, as one of a series of beacons lit throughout the country.



▲ Toposcope on trigpoint, Melbury Beacon  
© Copyright Becky Williamson and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.



▲ Berwick St John Country Fayre



## A Local Landscape Feature

*'At a height of 720 feet, Ashmore is one of Dorset's most remote and most appealing villages. At its centre is its well-known pond, possibly a type of dew pond that only dries out rarely. The village possesses many cottages from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century that employ a particularly pleasing blend of brick, local building materials and thatch'.*

John Chaffey. Dorset Life, December 2009

### Ashmore Pond

*'The pond in Ashmore Village is special to me because it provides a focal point to the village and significant sense of place. Ponds are a focal point to villages and a reminder of historical drovers routes where animals were watered en route. They are a link with local history but within a wider landscape'*

One of the highest villages in the south of England and the highest in Dorset it lies 700 feet above sea level. One of the major problems for hilltop settlements like Ashmore was that of water supply. The chalk drained the water away, so to preserve water the hilltop settlers dug holes in the chalk and lined them with clay to retain water. These 'Dew Ponds' provide water for livestock grazing on the hills or on their way to markets where a natural supply of surface water may not have been readily available. Few remain today and Ashmore village has grown up around one of the oldest and most famous ponds in the country. Even the village's very name is mentioned in the Domesday Book as 'Aisemere' derived from the Old English 'aesc and 'mere' meaning "pool where the ash trees grow".



▲ Ashmore pond

Due to the village's height above sea level the relationship between evaporation and condensation was such that very little water was lost to evaporation. It is seldom dry even in the hottest season.

However, there have been rare occurrences when the pond has dried out completely. Edward William Watson, in his 1859 publication "Ashmore, Co. Dorset: a history of the parish with index to the registers, 1651 to 1820" writes an account of the time when this happened and the traditional village custom associated with it.

*"The great pond, from which the village takes its name, (for Ashmore is a corruption of Ashmere, little more than three hundred years old ; Ashmeer occurs in a will of 1698) sixteen feet deep opposite the Rectory, has nothing to equal it among the chalk downs of the neighbourhood, nor indeed in all the down country of Wiltshire and Dorsetshire. In all probability, however it may have been enlarged, its beginnings are natural ; it must be a swallow-hole, like those in the Yorkshire limestone. It rarely fails, though it is only fed by rain water. Perhaps, on an average, it is dry once in twenty years; and then the villagers, by ancient custom, hold a feast. Cakes are baked, and eaten round the margin and in the bed of the pond ; and the farmers haul out the hundreds of cart-loads of mud which have accumulated on the bottom, and lay them on their land".*



## Important Landscape Feature from WW1

*“There is a green hill down our way, A signal sleeve on verdant ground. It bears the badges – sen by hand, Modest, simple – nothing grand”*

Extract from ‘Fovant Badges’ by Nigel Brodrick-Barker

**The Fovant Chalk Badges** are a notable feature on the Fovant Escarpment and can be seen from the A30, the Salisbury to Shaftesbury road. These form the largest group of chalk figures in the UK and are both a SAM and a military monument.

The Third New Army was created in September 1914 and the some of the 26th Division were stationed along the Fovant escarpment. The Fovant Cap Badges were created by soldiers stationed at the Fovant camps. The first badge on the downs was that of the London Rifle Brigade cut during 1916. By the end of World War One there were 20 badges some of which were replaced by carvings placed there after the end of World War Two. The last cap badge created was the Royal Corps of Signals cut in 1970.

The Fovant Badges Association is active in the management of the Fovant Chalk Badges.

Unfortunately several chalk badges have been lost due to the cost of maintaining these monuments. The surviving chalk cap badges are very prominent features The Chalk Cap Badges at Fovant has important meaning for the local community.

Just over a mile west of Fovant lies the Sutton Badges. Sutton Mandeville hosted thousands of soldiers in camps either side of today’s A30. Between 1915 and 1918 several different units were based there, preparing soldiers for service on the Western Front.

There are few signs of these camps today, but soldiers from two regiments also left carvings of their cap badges cut into the downs: the 7th (City of London) Battalion of the London Regiment (known as the ‘Shiny Seventh’); and the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

After the First World War the two badges at Sutton Mandeville were periodically maintained for about 70 years. From the 1990s onwards they became quite overgrown and almost lost from sight. With the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and others,

The Sutton Mandeville Heritage Trust has worked hard to restore the badges to ensure that the Sutton Badges take their place in the landscape once again.



▲ Fovant Badges ©The Fovant Badges Society



▲ The Royal Warwickshire badge nearing the completion of its restoration – The Sutton Mandeville Heritage Trust.



## A Local Character

It is recorded that Mrs Ridout operated as the proprietress of a carrier business, conveying goods between the village of Coombe Bissett and 'The Shoulder of Mutton' Inn, Salisbury. She would always stop at a local inn for a refresher for herself and the donkey. Generally the donkey would drink from the same jug!



▲ Mrs Ridout and the Coombe Express  
© Salisbury Museum

## Rights of Way

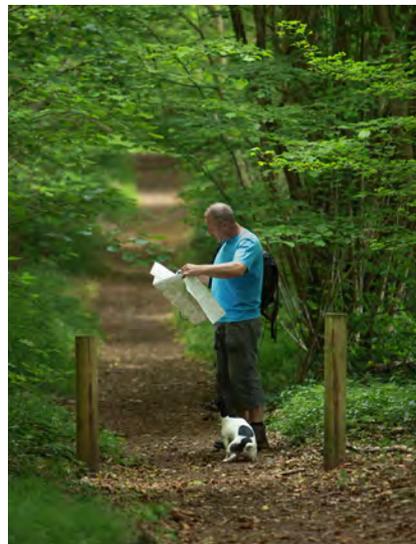
The CCCV LP area is crisscrossed with a dense historic pattern of Rights of Ways.

### LCA 2.8 Accesses and Recreation

A dominant feature is the ancient Ox Drove which runs along the northern edge of the Chalk escarpment. An ancient Droveway with at least Saxon routes linking Dorset and the west to Salisbury and London beyond. Formed by drovers moving cattle long distance, it may also have been the route used to transport Portland stone to build Salisbury Cathedral. It is mostly a Byway Open to All Traffic and is associated with historic boundaries. It is linked to the wider area by a series of ancient trackways (private track, byway, bridleway and footpath) which are sunken hollow ways and green lanes in many cases. These lead away to the Vale of Wardour to the north and into the heartland of the Cranborne Chase to the south. Many of the routeways running through the Chase woodland are again at least Saxon in origin providing key crossing points across the shire boundary and are associated with indicative place names such as Bloody Shard Gate. Some of the surviving routeways mark historical survival of lost Rights of Way which crisscrossed formerly open downland and common land.



▲ Rider on one of the many bridleways



▲ Walkers and dogs



▲ Distinctive black and white sign post





▲ Broad Chalke stores

## Vibrant Communities

The Chalke Valley Stores, known locally as the HUB, is situated in the United Reformed Church in the centre of the village of Broad Chalke in the heart of the beautiful Chalke Valley. It is an award winning shop, post office, coffee shop and meeting place. The hub becomes a church once a month.

In addition to providing a service to the local villages along the valley, it also welcomes visitors from all over the country – indeed increasingly from all over the world. Many come to the Chalke Valley to explore the area which is rich in history and has many places of great interest to visit as well as events to attend.

